



Attractions

MAGAZINE

Fall 2016 • Volume 9, Issue 4

**Skull Island:
Reign of Kong**

Frozen Ever After

**Mickey's Royal
Friendship Faire**

**10 Things To Do
at Disney at Night**

**Q&A with a
Theme Park Designer**

**New Restaurant
at Animal Kingdom**

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The menacing entrance to Skull Island: Reign of Kong at Universal's Islands of Adventure. Photo by Jonathan Rodriguez/Sublime Image Photography



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WHAT'S NEW ON ATTRACTIONSMAGAZINE.com

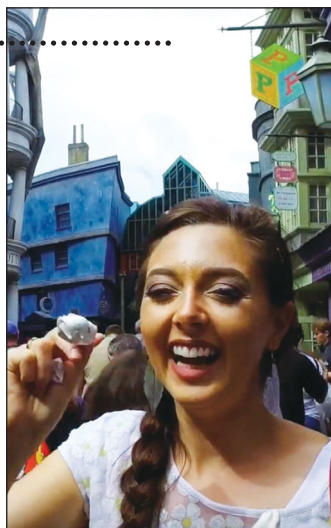
Check our website regularly for more articles, plus many videos. Stay up-to-date with all the latest theme park and attraction news through our weekly video shows, our free iPhone/iPad app and our free e-mail newsletter.

SUMMER OF NEW ATTRACTIONS



This summer has been a big one in Central Florida with at least one new addition opening up at every major theme park, from Frozen Ever After at Epcot to Cobra's Curse at Busch Gardens Tampa and more. Go to [YouTube.com/AttractionsMagazine](https://www.youtube.com/AttractionsMagazine) to see videos from all the new attractions, shows and restaurants that have recently opened.

NEW VLOGS AND SHOWS EVERY DAY



We recently welcomed two new vlogs to our Attractions Magazine family: "The Princess and the Vlog" and "Attractions Adventures". On "The Princess and the Vlog", join Forest and Alex Royer, a newlywed couple who enjoy the theme parks in Central Florida. From photography to cinematography, they endeavor to provide a very aesthetically pleasing show with a cinematic feel. "Attractions Adventures" comes to you from Shanghai, China as your host Matthew Eberle explores Disney's newest theme park, Shanghai Disneyland. He'll also head out into China to visit other fun and unique destinations. With the addition of these series, we now have an original show every day of the week for you to enjoy. Subscribe at [YouTube.com/AttractionsMagazine](https://www.youtube.com/AttractionsMagazine) for all the fun!

POKÉMON IN THE PARKS

The new Pokémon GO mobile game has become a worldwide phenomenon, and the theme parks have become a hot spot for trainers with many PokéStops and Gyms. Some parks have even jumped onboard the craze with special events. Our YouTube channel features looks at gameplay around Walt Disney World and Busch Gardens Tampa. Gotta catch 'em all!



TOWER OF TERROR CHECKING OUT IN CALIFORNIA



It had been rumored for some time, but during the Marvel panel at the 2016 San Diego Comic Con, an official announcement was made that Guardians of the Galaxy would be replacing The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at Disney California Adventure. This will be the first U.S.-based Marvel attraction inside a Disney park. Opinions on the news were very divided and discussions got heated on our blog and YouTube video of the announcement. Regardless if you love it or hate it, the attraction is set to open next summer. Head to our blog post and let us know your thoughts.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE NOW

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on our past issues

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Vol. 1, Issue 6



Vol. 2, Issue 1



Vol. 2, Issue 2



Vol. 2, Issue 3



Summer 2009



Fall 2009



Winter 2009-10



Spring 2010



Summer 2010



Fall 2010



Winter 2010-11



Spring 2011



Summer 2011



Fall 2011



Winter 2011-12



Spring 2012



Summer 2012



Fall 2012



Winter 2012-13



Spring 2013



Summer 2013



Fall 2013



Winter 2013-14



Summer 2014



Fall 2014



Winter 2014-15



Spring 2015



Summer 2015



Fall 2015



Winter 2015-16



Spring 2016

Summer 2016

If you missed any of these issues, don't worry!
They're all still available at AttractionsMagazine.com.



FEEDBACK

Favorite Fan Photos and Stories.



Everyone is a Minion at Universal Studios. — Crystal Bason



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Molly holding the world! — Nic Stimson



Me and my hubby enjoying Passholder Appreciation night at Universal Orlando. — Jennifer H. Tuck



Here we are on July 3rd at Magic Kingdom showing our love for the red, white and blue. — Jenny Brown Smedley



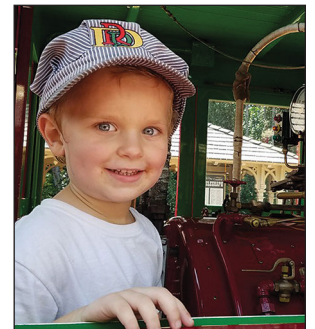
That moment when Mickey helped announce I'm getting a grandson! — Tresann Romano-Hal



Spider-Man and my kids at Universal's Islands of Adventure. — Luv-Ann Clopton Canham



My niece came to visit Orlando during Epcot's Flower and Garden Festival. Everything was beautiful. — Sally Sushii



My son loves to visit the trains on every trip. Since they are down at Disneyland while they build Star Wars land, he visits the conductors at the train station. They even let him wear the conductor hat. — Tara Schmidt



At the Magic Kingdom on PhotoPass Day. — Scott B. Encke



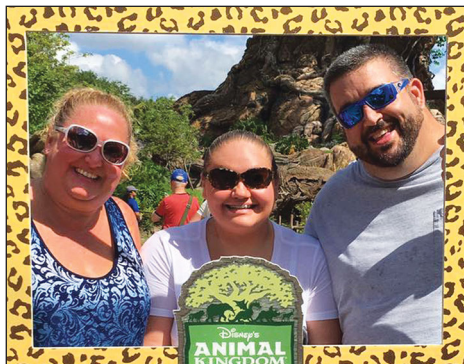
Helping the elephant team with enrichment at Busch Gardens Camp. — Sam Billups



Our family vacation at Disney World - our happy place!
— Gina M. Roof Russell



We're taking a spin in A Bug's Land at Disney California Adventure. — Jessica Finch Call



My family at Animal Kingdom. We had a blast!
— Maryann Entwistle Jackman



Waiting for the catapult on Space Mountain at Disneyland Paris.
— David Eponge



My friend Danielle Voss and I at Magic Kingdom. We have been friends for years but had never met in person. After years of talking online, we finally bumped into each other.
— Christelle Ladouceur

WRITE TO US!

.....

We want your letters and photos!

If you have any comments about the magazine, questions about traveling to Orlando or fun stories or photos to share, simply e-mail us at info@attractionsmagazine.com.



THEN & NOW

Kongfrontation to Mummy to Skull Island

THEN



PHOTO BY JEFF LANGE / NOISESTEPS.COM

NOW



PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

As you saw on our cover, and you'll read about on page 32, King Kong is back at Universal Orlando. In case you didn't know, Skull Island: Reign of Kong in Islands of Adventure isn't the first attraction starring the big ape at the resort. The Kongfrontation ride was one of the original attractions when Universal Studios first opened

in 1990. It was located where the Revenge of the Mummy roller coaster is today. The ride took guests through New York subways where they boarded an open-air aerial tram. They rode through the city and came face-to-face with King Kong, above left.. The ride closed in 2002. Now guests can come face-to-face with Kong again in Skull Island, above.

THEN

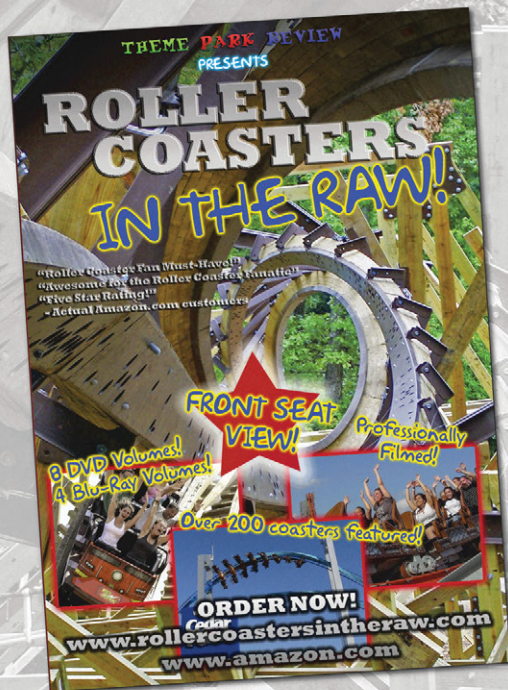


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VACATION PLANNER

We've chosen our favorite upcoming events to spotlight. You don't want to miss them on your next trip to Orlando.

By Banks Lee



HOWL-O-SCREAM

Location: Busch Gardens Tampa

Dates: Friday and Saturday, Sept. 23 and 24; every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from Sept. 29 to Oct. 29; Sunday Oct. 9, 16, 23 and 30

Cost: \$36 to \$100, Parental Discretion Advised.

Mr. Karver put his heart and soul into his dolls. After the authorities came to close him down, he locked himself in his "Hall of Dolls" and burned it to the ground. Now, the dummies are back and they insist the show must go on. It's the Evil Encore everyone is dying to see.

MICKEY'S NOT SO SCARY HALLOWEEN PARTY

Location: Magic Kingdom

Dates: Sept. 2, 8, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 29-30; Oct. 2, 4, 6-7, 10-11, 13-14, 16, 18, 20-21, 23, 25, 27-28, 30-31

Cost: \$72 to \$105

Disney characters don their favorite Halloween costumes, while partygoers navigate treat trails throughout a Magic Kingdom themed for happy haunts. Partygoers can dress up in Halloween costumes and explore their favorite attractions. Plus, there's special Halloween-themed entertainment.



SPOOKY EMPIRE

Location: Orange County Convention Center

Dates: Oct. 7-9

Cost: \$30 to \$75

Guests at this year's horror convention include Millie Bobby Brown (Eleven from "Stranger Things"), Robert Englund (original Freddy Krueger) and Weird Al Yankovic.

BRICK OR TREAT

Location: Legoland Florida Resort

Dates: Every Saturday and Sunday in October and Halloween

Cost: Included with theme park admission

Brick or Treat is a friendly-not-frightening event featuring trick-or-treating along the Brick or Treat Trail, Lego build activities, a scavenger hunt with prizes, and an exclusive, Halloween-themed fireworks show in Pirates' Cove.

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR

Location: SeaWorld Orlando

Dates: Every weekend, Oct. 1 to 30

Cost: Included with theme park admission

Halloween Spooktacular immerses families in an underwater "fantasea" filled with trick-or-treating, whimsical characters, sea-themed activities and up-close animal encounters.



HALLOWEEN HORROR NIGHTS

Location: Universal Studios Florida

Dates: Sept. 16-18, 22-25, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, Oct. 6-9, 12-16, 19-23, 26-31

Cost: \$56 to \$105, Parental Discretion Advised.

Halloween Horror Nights returns to Universal Orlando this fall for a record-breaking 31 nights — and with all-new content that will bring unimaginable terrors to life, including The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, American Horror Story, Krampus and more.



INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL

Location: Epcot

Dates: Sept. 14 to Nov. 14

Cost: Included with theme park admission

Top celebrity chefs, brand new Disney resort cooking and dining experiences and Eat to the Beat dining packages will add fresh twists to the 21st annual event.



MICKEY'S VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS PARTY

Location: Magic Kingdom

Dates: Nov. 7-8, 10-11, 13, 15, 18, 27, 29; Dec. 1-2, 4, 6, 8-9, 11, 13, 15-16, 18, 22

Cost: \$86 to \$99

When Mickey celebrates the season, Magic Kingdom lights up with excitement for guests of all ages. Cinderella Castle shimmers, joyful music fills the air and Disney characters don their most festive attire. Plus special holiday shows.

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR

Location: Legoland Florida Resort

Dates: Dec. 17-18, 24-30

Cost: Included with theme park admission
Deck the halls with a 30-foot-tall Christmas tree

made of thousands of Lego and Duplo bricks. Plus you'll experience a life-size Lego Santa, reindeer and sleigh, holiday-themed scavenger hunts with prizes, Lego Santa and Lego Toy Soldier appearances and a fireworks spectacular set to classic Christmas melodies.



HOLIDAYS AT UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

Location: Universal Orlando Resort

Dates: Dec. 3 through Jan. 1

Cost: Included with theme park admission
At Universal Studios Florida, Macy's Holiday Parade fills the streets with floats and more, plus performances by Mannheim Steamroller on select dates. The fun continues with Grinchmas at Universal's Islands of Adventure, featuring the Grinchmas Who-liday Spectacular.



SEAWORLD'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Location: SeaWorld Orando

Dates: Select nights, Nov. 25 to Dec. 31

Cost: Included with theme park admission
Carols fill the air, a sea of lighted trees sparkles over the lake in a wintery, watery wonderland, and skaters twirl on ice. The event includes festive food, live shows and entertainment inspired by the natural world.



OPENINGS

2016:

- Rivers of Light (Disney's Animal Kingdom)

2017:

- Pandora - The World of Avatar (Disney's Animal Kingdom)
- Race Through New York Starring Jimmy Fallon (Universal Studios Florida)
- Universal's Volcano Bay Water Theme Park (Universal Orlando)
- Lego Ninjago World & Legoland Beach Retreat (Legoland Florida Resort)

2018:

- Fast & Furious: Supercharged (Universal Studios Florida)

Future:

- Star Wars Land (Disney's Hollywood Studios and Disneyland)
- Toy Story Land (Disney's Hollywood Studios)

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Walt Disney World Resort

disneyworld.com (407) 939-6244

SeaWorld Orlando

seaworld.com/orlando (800) 327-2424

Busch Gardens Tampa

buschgardens.com/bgt (888) 800-5447

Legoland Florida

florida.legoland.com (877) 350-5346

Universal Orlando Resort

universolorlando.com (407) 363-8000

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All events and dates are subject to change.
Please check with the proper organization before attending.
Check our calendar section at AttractionsMagazine.com
for up-to-date happenings in the Orlando area.

CHRISTMAS TOWN

Location: Busch Gardens Tampa

Dates: Select dates from Nov. 25 through Dec. 31

Cost: Included with theme park admission
Busch Gardens transforms into a holiday wonderland of entertainment, holiday shopping, festive treats and more than two million twinkling lights.



NEWS IN THE QUEUE

By Quinn Roseboom

HULK ROARS

Location: Universal's Islands of Adventure



The Incredible Hulk Coaster has finally roared back to life after a lengthy refurbishment. The entire track was replaced, new vehicles were added, as well as a soundtrack, updated queue and storyline, and a statue of the Hulk himself. Fun Fact: The coaster track surrounding Hulk at the entrance was made from the old track.

AN AVALORIAN VISITOR

Location: Magic Kingdom



"The Royal Welcome of Princess Elena" is a live performance that's being presented several times daily on the Castle Forecourt Stage. Cinderella and Prince Charming host their newest royal friend and invite her to share her story with park guests through her song, "My Time."



READY FOR HER CLOSE-UP!

Location: Universal Studios



Guests can now see Marilyn Monroe and a handful of her backup dancers perform a pair of musical numbers on the streets of New York. As she's preparing for her "upcoming film," you'll hear her signature tune "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend", and "Candyman." The show is then followed by a short meet and greet with her adoring fans. (That means you!)

STEAMPUNK SWEETS & EATS

Location: Universal CityWalk

The Toothsome Chocolate Emporium and Savory Feast Kitchen is now open to guests, featuring “fantastical” meals with a soundtrack of Electro-swing and very Steampunk-style surroundings. You may even get to meet the Emporium’s founder Penelope and her chocolate-powered robot.



CAN YOU CONQUER THE COBRA'S CURSE?

Location: Busch Gardens Tampa



A new family-friendly multi-directional roller coaster is now open in the Egypt section of Busch Gardens Tampa. The ride is a one-of-a-kind spin coaster that features a menacing snake king icon and a 70-foot vertical lift that takes riders within inches of its fangs. The three-and-a-half-minute ride sends guests propelling through its serpentine-like track, traveling backward, forward and then spinning freely.

MAKE TIME FOR MAKO!

Location: SeaWorld Orlando



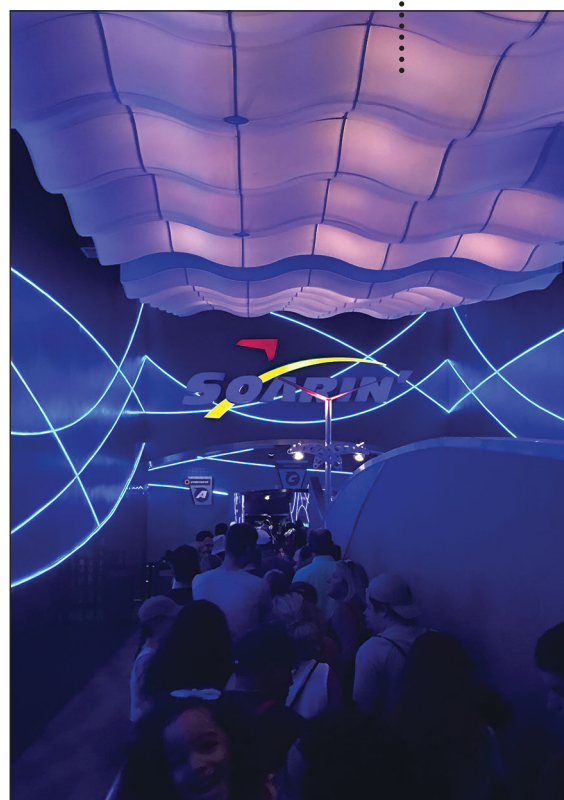
Mako, the new 200-foot-tall hypercoaster, is now the tallest, fastest and longest roller coaster in Orlando. It anchors a two-acre land, called Shark Wreck Reef which also includes the existing Shark Encounter attraction, exhibits, dining and shopping options.

WE HAVE TAKEOFF!

Location: Epcot



Guests can now experience a new version of Soarin', where they'll take flight above The Great Wall of China, journey over the Great Pyramid of Egypt, and fly up to the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, plus many other locations. In addition to the new film, "Soarin' Around the World" now features a third theater and a new interactive trivia game in the queue.



DVC MEMBERS CAN RELAX IN STYLE

Location: Epcot



Disney Vacation Club members can enjoy a new members-only lounge while visiting the Imagination pavilion in Future World. Inside the lounge itself, which is upstairs within one of the pavilion's iconic towering glass pyramids, guests can recharge their cellular devices, enjoy free Coca-Cola Freestyle sodas, play video games, watch cartoons, and surf iPad Pros. The lounge is open every day. DVC members may bring guests.

YET ANOTHER COOKING RAT

Location: Disney's Hollywood Studios

Gone are the days of being able to eat at Pizza Planet, at least in Florida. But don't fear! You'll still be able to pick up a hot pie from the Muppets' very own Rizzo the Rat at his family's pizzeria. It's called, what else, "PizzeRizzo" and will open soon.



A SALUTE TO ALL NATIONS, BUT MOSTLY AMERICA

Location: Magic Kingdom



Beginning in October, the Muppets will star in an all-new live show called "The Muppets Present ... Great Moments in American History." Sam Eagle, Kermit, Miss Piggy, Fozzie, Gonzo and James Jefferson, town crier of Liberty Square, will gather daily outside The Hall of Presidents to present historical tales in hysterical fashion. From the midnight ride of Paul Revere to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Muppets will share their own unique take on the founding fathers and the birth of the United States of America.

ONLY ONE INNOVENTION

Location: Epcot



The Sum of All Thrills robotic roller coaster simulator and the StormStruck 3D edutainment attraction inside Innoventions East are now both closed, leaving only one attraction in the building, Colortopia. Nothing has been announced to replace the shuttered attractions. A chunk of the building that used to house Innoventions West now holds an expansion of Character Spot where guests can meet Joy and Sadness from Inside Out and Baymax from Big Hero 6.

RED EYES

Location: International Drive

I-Drive 360's enormous 400-foot observation wheel has been rechristened with a sweet, bubbly new name: the Coca-Cola Orlando Eye. Guests are now greeted with a refreshed look throughout the interior and exterior of the Eye's terminal building, featuring Coca-Cola's signature red and white colors. On the wheel itself, select capsules have been transformed to offer special décor, upbeat music, selfie sticks, themed tablets and Coca-Cola coolers to lucky riders. The Eye will now light up red as its default color at night. A new 7D simulator ride is also now open in I-Drive 360's terminal building, where guests can choose from a few different shooting games to compete against with their friends



GET SHANGHYPED!

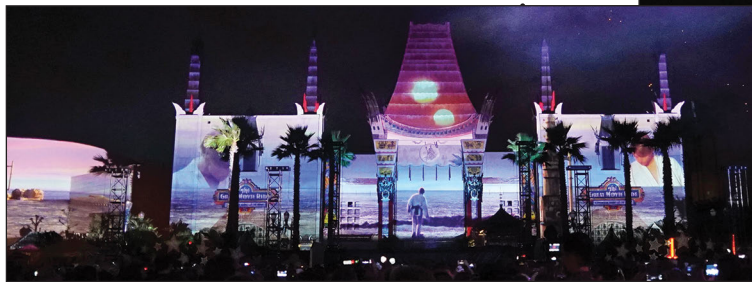
Location: Epcot



The House of the Whispering Willows Gallery in the China pavilion used to host an exhibit on the history of ancient China and a display of the Terra Cotta Warriors, but now you'll find something much more modern. The new "Inside Shanghai Disney Resort" gallery showcases exclusive artwork and props which offer a look at the classic and cutting-edge attractions within Shanghai Disneyland's six lands.

I'VE GOT A GOOD FEELING ABOUT THIS

Location: Disney's Hollywood Studios



Through projections, lasers and pyrotechnics on the Chinese Theatre and two surrounding buildings, guests can now gaze at the twin suns of Tatooine, navigate through an asteroid field, soar down the trench of the Death Star and experience more of their favorite moments from a galaxy far far away every night. "Star Wars: A Galactic Spectacular" unfolds through a series of moments, punctuated by fire towers and spotlight beams that create lightsabers in the sky. On not very windy nights, you can also see some cool hologram images during the show.



FUN OLD TOWN SPOT

Location: Kissimmee



Fun Spot America has partnered with Old Town USA for the relocation of several rides to Old Town's new entertainment district. They'll also be partnering to add a new Ferris wheel soon. Fun Spot's Kissimmee location has also added a new attraction called "Head Rush 360" as well as a "New York Burger Company" food stand.

WHAT'S NEXT O-KNIGHTS?

Location: Legoland Florida



The newly renovated Imagination Zone and Nexo Knights 4D film are now open. In the Imagination Zone, kids can build, race and fly their creations in an indoor play area that's been transformed with colorful furnishings and floor-to-ceiling graphics. In the Fun Town Theater, visitors can also now watch "Lego Nexo Knights: The Book of Creativity" where they'll follow five young knights in their quest to defeat a Lava Monster Army.



PHOTO FINDS

Orlando is always filled with fun things to see and our photographers are there to capture it all.

On June 12, someone entered the **Pulse Nightclub** in downtown Orlando and opened fire, killing 49 people, many of whom worked at the local attractions or were friends with attraction employees. Many **tributes** followed, including one outside Hogwarts Castle and one at Magic Kingdom. Universal Orlando team members and friends paid their respects to team member Luis Vielma by raising their wands in The **Wizarding World of Harry Potter** on June 13 in Universal's Islands of Adventure. Guests and cast members gathered at the **Magic Kingdom** for a Kiss Goodnight memorial vigil on June 18. Many attractions showed their support in other ways, such as The Orlando Eye lit-up in **rainbow colors**.

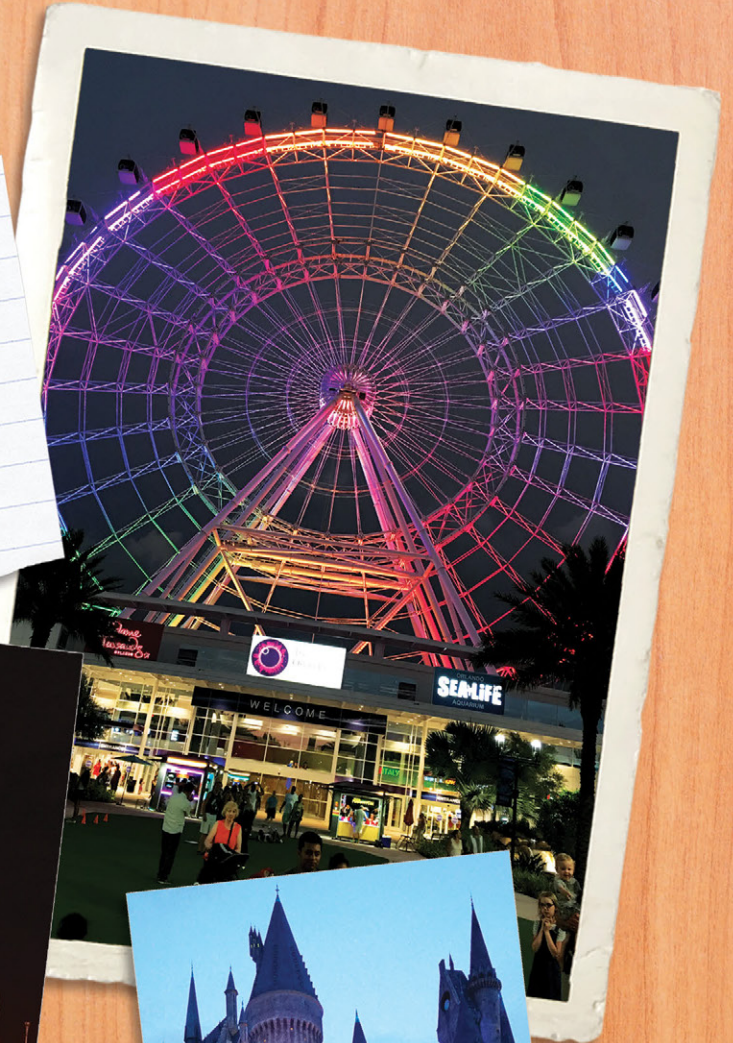


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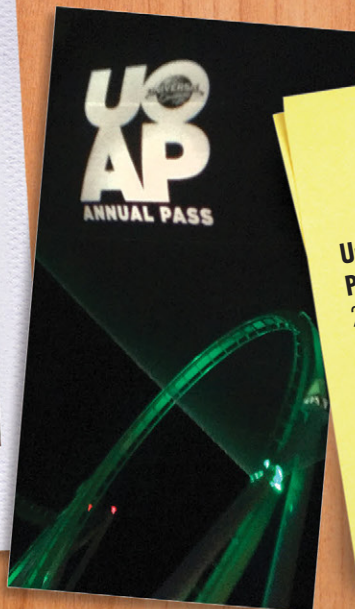
PHOTO BY THARIN WHITE



The **Lowry Park Zoo** in Tampa held a **Sunset Celebration** on select nights this summer. The event included live music, special food and wine, animal talks, a DJ and a laser light show finale.



MegaCon was held May 26 to 29 at the Orange County Convention Center. This year's event seemed to have quite a few people **cosplaying** as **Dreamfinder**, a Disney character that used to meet and be a part of the Journey Into Imagination ride at Epcot.



Universal Orlando held their first ever **Exclusive Passholder After-Hours Party** on Aug. 19 and 20. Annual passholders who signed up for the event were able to ride most of the attractions in Islands of Adventure, as well as ride the Hogwarts Express to Diagon Alley for a few hours after the parks had closed. The UOAP (Universal Orlando Annual Passholder) logo was projected on many surfaces around the park and a special group photo was taken each night by The Incredible Hulk Coaster.



VERSUS

We put attractions head-to-head.

By Banks Lee

Soarin' Versus Soarin' Around the World

Soarin' Over California opened at Disney California Adventure in 2001 and at Epcot in 2005 as just Soarin'.

But both versions recently underwent a major update to become Soarin' Around the World.

Let's take a look at both versions of the attraction and see how they stack up.

SOARIN' OVER CALIFORNIA

VS.

SOARIN' AROUND THE WORLD

QUEUE

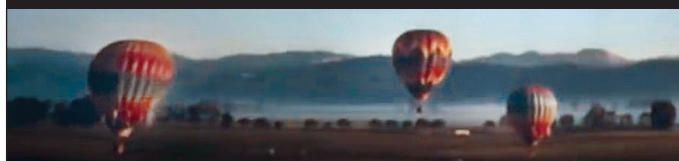


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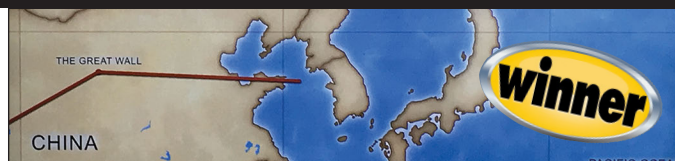


Strictly talking about the version of the queue inside The Land at Epcot, no major changes were made with the exception of the interactive games guests can play while waiting (now trivia). The queue has an airport terminal theme as you make your way to your gate to embark on your journey. Don't worry, your flight attendant Patrick still narrates the safety video.

DESTINATIONS

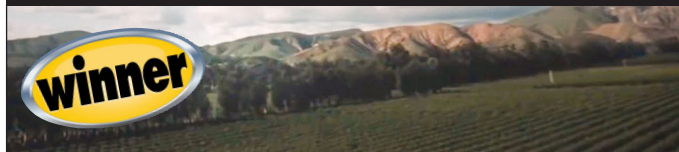


With the first image of the Golden Gate Bridge, the places and environments you visited over California were breathtaking. Not all the visuals were recognizable in terms of their location, but they still made for a beautiful flight.



With the ride film expanded to the whole world, the locations you visit are all very iconic and gorgeous. Though some elements are more CGI than practical, there's still plenty to look at and enjoy.

SCENTS



Soarin' is known for the different scents you encounter during your flight that really add to the realism. We prefer the California smells, including oranges and pine.



New destinations mean new scents, such as grass and sea breeze. Although the scents still add a great element to the ride, they just aren't as good as the California versions.

MUSIC



Composer Jerry Goldsmith crafted a score for Soarin' that became very recognizable, with a main theme that played in different variations in the queue and throughout the ride. Each scene had its own style, and the ending would always provide chills.

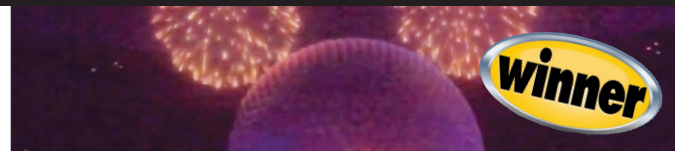


Bruce Broughton, who is no stranger to Disney theme park scores, was brought in to compose the updated Soarin'. Although the main theme is carried over and updated from the previous version, the new score lacks any big differences in music between scenes, basically replaying the same theme but in that region's specific style.

ENDING



No flight over California would be complete without a stop at Disneyland, which is where Soarin' would end its journey. Though it's an iconic location and a great way to end, it always felt a little off when Soarin' at Epcot, and because it was the Christmas season as well.



With Soarin' Around the World in three different parks around the globe, it made sense to have a different ending based on the park you ride in. Disney California Adventure ends at Disneyland, Epcot ends over Spaceship Earth, and Shanghai Disneyland ends over downtown Shanghai. Watch out for the fireworks though!

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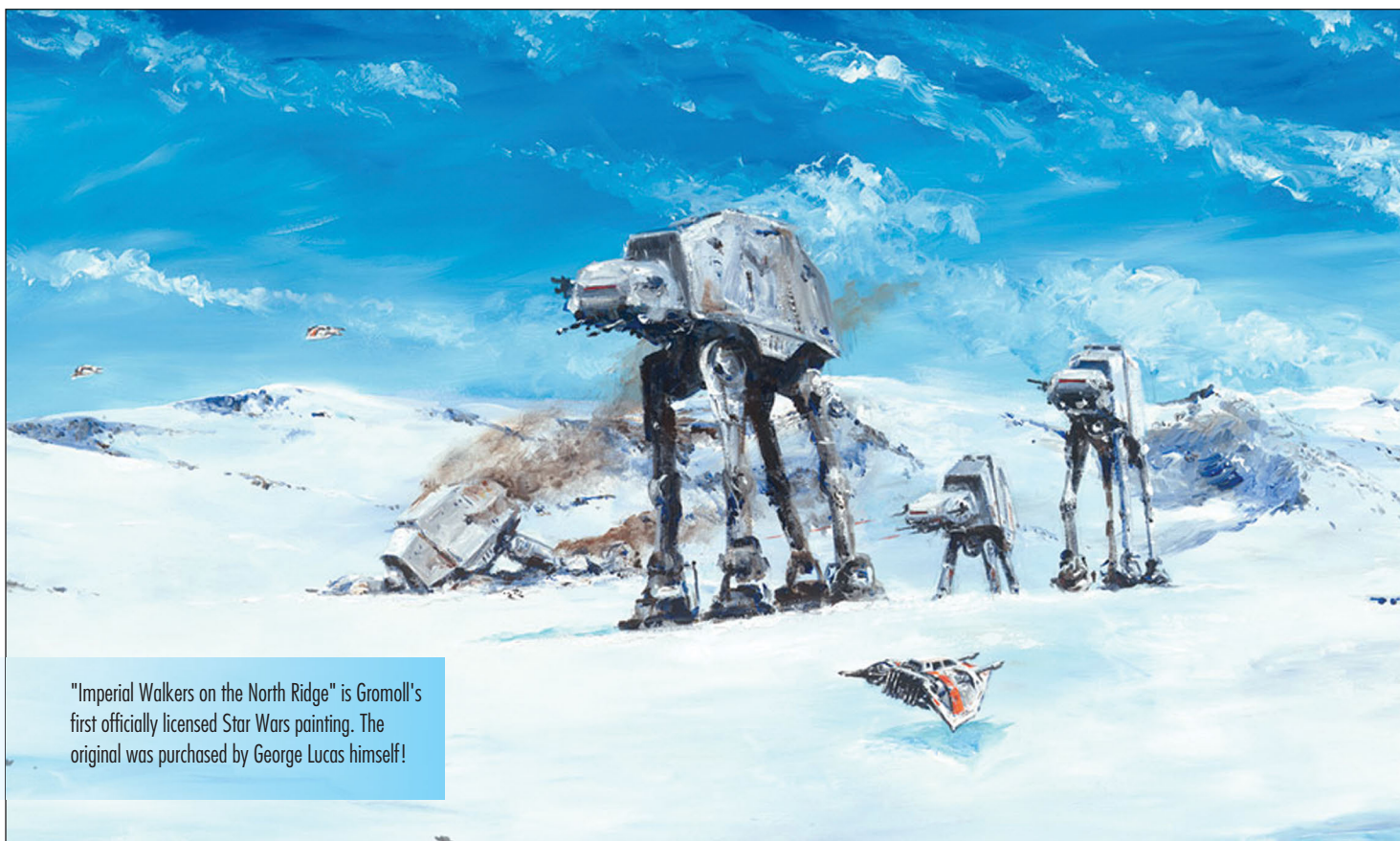


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"Imperial Walkers on the North Ridge" is Gromoll's first officially licensed Star Wars painting. The original was purchased by George Lucas himself!



Original pencil sketch of "The Terra Queen's Bike" designed by Gromoll for Halloween Horror Nights: Tales of Terror.

From Halloween Horror Nights to Frozen

Kim Gromoll's Design Work Can Be Seen in All the Cool Theme Parks

Kim Gromoll is a freelance theme park designer who has worked in the industry for more than 20 years. His credits include iconic designs for Universal, Disney, Busch Gardens and more. Quick with a laugh and a good story, Kim has seen it all as he's watched the industry grow and change over the years.

How did you get into theme park design?

I was an illustrator for the first part of my life, so my background is in two dimensional illustration. But then when I came down here 20 years ago, I found that I had an ability to think in three dimensions. I moved down from Philadelphia and I was interviewing around town at different companies and none of the big guys were hiring, but there were a lot of smaller companies. Richard Crane, this old 75-year-old pirate guy took a chance on me and hired me as a full time designer. So, I started doing concept work for his company, Richard Crane Productions.

Where did you go next?

Richard Crane was a wonderful guy but he overextended and went bankrupt. So I started looking around and freelancing at other companies and ended up at the Magic Dreamhouse in Thornton Park. And while I was there, I wound up doing work for Disney. I did stuff for the millennium and a bunch of stuff for the opening of Disney's Animal Kingdom, including some of their shows and street entertainment. I stayed busy with them for about a year and then got a call to do a two-day gig at Universal. They used to have an



area called the Boneyard and they wanted me to come up with something new for it. So I spent two days doing drawings for them, and I wound up staying for 16 years.

What projects did you work on at Universal?

After the Boneyard work, which sadly never came to fruition, I worked on a small area called Sound Stage 54. It's where the Donkey and Shrek meet and greet is now. But back then, they would show a behind-the-scenes look at Universal properties that were coming out. So, the first job I did there was for a movie called "Small Soldiers". I worked on Sound Stage 54 a few more times before I started my love affair with Halloween Horror Nights.

What kind of stuff did you do for Halloween Horror Nights?

I started out doing concept work and some individual rooms before I got to work on some of the bigger projects and design things from the ground up. One of my favorite houses I worked on was called Gothic. It was a big Gothic cathedral. Another of my favorites was Nightingales, with its World War One trenches. I also worked on "The Thing" and "Halloween" and a few other houses, and of course, the Bill and Ted shows.

So, what exact parts did you work on?

I did design. So for the houses, I would design the path and the walls. Not necessarily the look of the walls, but we'd take each room and answer the questions

"What is this room?," "How big is it?," "How does it work?," "Where do the actors come from?," etc. I would design the flow of the house, and then we would hire freelance designers to flesh it out, and I would art direct that. For Bill and Ted's, I would design the set. I also did several of the larger shows. One year, I designed Carnival of Carnage, a Jack The Clown show which they brought back last year. Then there was another I worked on called the Arrival Show which involved all five of the icons.

We've heard you are particularly proud of the "Skool House" at Halloween Horror Nights.

Oh yes! The Skool House is my favorite thing I've done as a theme park designer. It was written by a show director, Michael Roddy, who wanted to get back to a traditional Northeast Halloween, so he came up with the idea for this dilapidated school house. I designed it to have no straight lines at all. The back was broken, the bell tower was tipped over, it looked old and dilapidated. Next to the Skool House, we designed a place called "pumpkin alley" where we put 400 jack-o-lanterns that flickered. Then, on an audio cue, all the pumpkins would suddenly blow out. It was very spooky!

After Universal, what did you do next?

I went over to Disney as a Senior Art Director in the entertainment department. I was only there about 16 months, but while I was there, I worked on some cool projects. The first was the 20th anniversary of "The Lion King". I was brand new to the company and I was handed a show that was pretty high priority. I had to design a stage that could come in and out because it took place in the Festival of the Lion King venue, which had to do shows during the day. Our set had scenery, decks, multiple levels, and screens, and it had to accommodate a choral group, narrators, dancers, an orchestra and it all had to get set up in 45 minutes. And as soon as the show was



The Nut Bus, top, and The Simpson's RV, bottom, are two vehicles Gromoll designed for Universal Orlando.

done it had to be broken down and taken out.

After that I worked on Mr. Oogie Boogie's Funky Freak House and I think it's still the only show ever at Disney that had a parental advisory for young children. There was nothing there you wouldn't see on 7 o'clock TV, but there was sword swallowing and fire breathing, so maybe if you're three or four, this show wouldn't be great for you.

The last thing I designed at Disney was a parade unit for Elsa's Ice Castle, another of my favorite things because I got to take the project from design to art directing the construction. It's great because little by little you see it all come together, and then you get to go out there when it's done and see these little kids with their faces all aglow because here comes Elsa's Castle!

What have you been doing since then?

I'm freelancing with a bunch of com-

panies – some little, some not so little. Right now, I'm working on a couple of projects for Nickelodeon, which is a wonderful company with some great folks. I'm also working on a project in Asia for a company called ITEC, which does great work. And a bunch of smaller companies too.

What's the community of designers like?

It's funny, because a lot of people look at the theme park world and think "Oh, Disney hates Universal and Universal dislikes Busch Gardens", but really, we're all friends. I can't tell you how many times I've found myself sitting on a Thursday night get-together surrounded by friends who work at Disney or Universal or SeaWorld. If one of the theme parks does a great job, that helps everybody. When I was at Universal, we'd go to Disney and look at their stuff with mouth agape, and then when I was at Disney, we'd go to Universal and look at Diagon Alley, and go "Oh my gosh, this is great!"

What else keeps you busy?

Well, I'm a geek. Almost everyone I know in the theme park world is a geek and I say that with love. Ever since I first saw it, I've been in love with "Star Wars". A couple years ago, I took a Star Wars painting I did for myself to Star Wars Celebration, and I stopped by the booth for Acme Archives, who handles the official Star Wars Fine Art licensing. They said they could use me doing prints for Star Wars. I



Gromoll, left, designed Halloween Horror Nights icon Jack the Clown based on a story by writer Michael Roddy, right, in 2000.

have four Star Wars prints out right now and soon I'll be working on one for "Rogue One". One of the coolest things is that after the prints are done, George Lucas has the option to purchase the original if he wants it and he has bought two of mine.

You also run the Entertainment Designers Forum. How did that come about?

One of the artists who worked with me at Universal was my good friend Stephanie Girard. She was an amazing person. She did it all. Well, while we worked together, she developed colon cancer. She fought it for seven years before she passed away. While I was at Universal we first put together a Relay For Life team to raise money and then I had the idea for the Entertainment Designers Forum. In it, there are people who would pay money to hear theme park designers talk about how we do what we do. We've had seven so far and we usually make around 16 or 17 thousand dollars, which we donate to the charity. We bring in designers from all the major parks around town and we have a couple sessions with questions and answers. There's a silent auction of one-of-a-kind things from the theme park industry. It means so much to me. I'll probably keep doing it till I can't do it anymore.

Now for the hard questions! What's your favorite attraction?

My all-time traditional favorite varies between The Haunted Mansion and Pirates of the Caribbean. Coming back into the future, I would have to say the entire land of Diagon Alley because it's so immersive. It just blows me away.

What advice do you give people who want to do what you do?

If you're a freelance artist in the Orlando area, definitely look into the "Slice Creative Network." Not just anyone can get in. You have to apply and be accepted. But if you're just starting out, they have mixers you can attend and mingle with freelancers and employers. Also, TEA [Themed Entertainment

Association] is a good resource. When I was starting out, I used to find where the TEA meetings were happening and I would attend and network. I think you need to not be timid and not expect to get right to the top. The guys who do Halloween Horror Nights have been doing it for 15 years. That's not an easy team to break into. But, thankfully there are so many companies around town that are clamoring for people.

Why do you think themed entertainment is so important?

It's an escape; it makes people feel good. When I was younger, my family would come to the parks and there's a wonderful feeling we would get that would wash over us. We would get in



Gromoll's original design, top, for the Skool House and the completed project, bottom, at Halloween Horror Nights: Reflections of Fear.

when the park opened and stay until the park closed. I don't know if I could do that now, but we would do it all the time. And then when I came down with my own family and children, we would go to every single park. I mean, the outside world has a lot of horror and crap and bills to pay, but here, it's escapism. You get to face a dragon at Diagon Alley and then you can go meet Elsa, and then ride a coaster that's the fastest, tallest coaster at SeaWorld.

And what does it mean for you personally?

I tell a story a lot about my old mentor at Universal, Paul Pavis. I was on the Mardi Gras stage during the day once and I was having a rough day. Things weren't working right and we were trying to figure out a problem. And just then, I heard the music playing for the "Nut Bus", a big red bus that I had designed the previous year. We stood there as this vehicle went by with all these kids following it, so excited. And Paul looked at me and said, "Gromoll, do you know what you do for a living? You make kids smile." So how do you not love what you do when that's what you do?



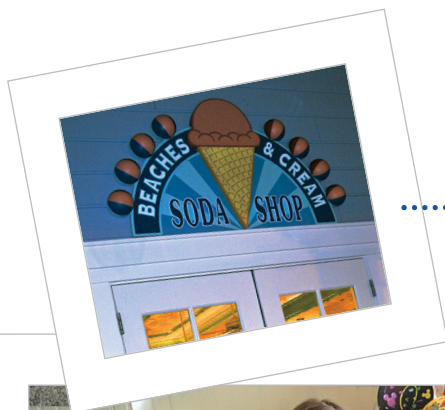
Elsa greets guests from atop her castle parade float at Disney's Hollywood Studios. It was designed by Gromoll.

By Ben Rebstock

Top 10 Things To Do at Night at Disney

There is never a shortage of things to do during the day when you're vacationing at Walt Disney World. But some nights, you just

don't want the fun to end! Check out my list of the Top 10 Things To Do at Night at Walt Disney World.



10

EAT ICE CREAM AT BEACHES & CREAM SODA SHOP DISNEY'S BEACH CLUB RESORT

Tucked away inside a small spot near the pool at Disney's Beach Club Resort is Beaches & Cream, a place rarely advertised, but you wouldn't know that from the line of people stretched outside the door every night. This popular ice cream parlor stays open late, making it a great choice for those needing a late-night snack after a long day in the parks. Signature deserts such as the No Way Jose and Fudge Mudslide, along with a new line of adult alcoholic milk shakes, can be seen on every table. If you're brave enough, there's always room for The Kitchen Sink — a scoop of every ice cream on the menu, topped with every topping at their disposal. If you're visiting after the parks close, be prepared for a wait because of the limited seating. But trust me, the wait is worth it.



PHOTO BY LORI SCHULZ

9

GO BOWLING AND MORE SPLITSVILLE LUXURY LANES

One of the finest bowling establishments in Orlando can be found at Disney Springs where Splitsville anchors the West Side of the property. Open until 1 a.m. during the week and 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday, it's the perfect place to hang out when you aren't ready for your day to finish. As the name implies, high-end bowling lanes can be found inside this huge building along with pool tables, a restaurant, a sushi bar and an outdoor bar with live music. The food is some of the most underrated on Disney property. The atmosphere is always very fun and it's great for the whole family.



8

SING WITH YEHAA BOB JACKSON PORT ORLEANS RESORT - RIVERSIDE

If you love singing and dancing, then some of the most fun you can have on property is over at the River Roost Lounge. This is where you can find Yehaa Bob Jackson rockin' and rollin' his piano while playing some of the best sing-a-long songs around. The crowds are big, loud and always having a good time! And even though this is technically a "lounge" and alcohol is served, Bob keeps the shows family friendly so your kids can join in the fun.



7

WALK AROUND BY YOURSELF WALT DISNEY WORLD THEME PARKS

Security doesn't usher everyone out of the theme parks as fast as they can at closing time. Even though the rides and shops might be closed, you can still walk around and explore. As more people exit an area, you get the feeling you're experiencing something special as you stand in an area all by yourself that just hours earlier, was filled with thousands of people. My favorite part is getting to hear all the sound effects playing in the background that you don't notice during the day — showing you just how immersive the Disney experience really is. Oh, and don't forget to take lots of pictures.



6

HAVE DRINKS AT TRADER SAM'S GROG GROTT DISNEY'S POLYNESIAN VILLAGE RESORT

Disney rarely does anything normal, which is why we love it. So why cap off your night with a drink at a normal bar when you can enjoy Trader Sam's? Tucked into the back corner of Disney's Polynesian Village Resort, this enchanted watering hole will delight you with their drinks and surprise you with their humor. The bartenders have special routines they perform when serving specialty drinks, often times with the help from special effects hidden in the walls and ceiling. It's a blast and a great way to keep the "theme park" feeling going into the night.

5

EAT HOT DOGS AT CASEY'S CORNER MAGIC KINGDOM

Playing in the Magic Kingdom all day sure can leave you hungry. That's why I love going to Casey's Corner on Main Street to end my night. The restaurant stays open 45 minutes after the official closing time of the park, making it the perfect spot to fill up before you head home. Grab a table outside and dine under the glow of Cinderella Castle and the magical golden lights that line Main Street after dark. It's great food, great times and a great way to end the night.



4

WATCH FIREWORKS WALT DISNEY WORLD THEME PARKS

It's a tradition like none other — fireworks at Disney to end the night. These shows are so great, they'll ruin any fireworks show you'll ever see again back home. The park standards are "Wishes" at the Magic Kingdom and "IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth" at Epcot. But the best just might be the new "Star Wars: A Galactic Spectacular" at Disney's Hollywood Studios. Whichever show you choose, you won't be disappointed.

3

SHOP, DINE AND MORE DISNEY SPRINGS

What is there to do after the parks close? Well, Disney has given you a great option now with Disney Springs. If you aren't ready to head back to your hotel

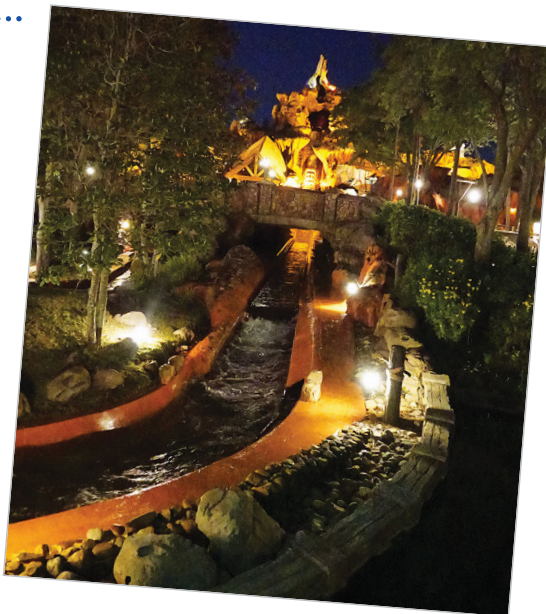
for some shut-eye, you can visit Florida's premier shopping, dining and entertainment district. There are several amazing restaurants from some of the top chefs in the world to go with even more unique shopping destinations. You can even catch a concert at House of Blues or get a sky-high view of Orlando at night in the Characters In Flight balloon ride. Most stores are open until 11 p.m. and some of the bars stay open until the wee hours of the morning.



RIDE RIDES WALT DISNEY WORLD THEME PARKS

2

The parks are often less busy at night, which makes it the perfect time to ride some of the most popular rides. And if a fireworks show is going on, even better! Remember, as long as you are in line for a ride a second before the park closes, you will get to ride: meaning you'll be in the park even later than scheduled.



1

THE KISS GOODNIGHT MAGIC KINGDOM

Did you know that if you stay at Magic Kingdom late enough, you'll get a special little "show" wishing you a goodnight as you leave the park? It's called the "Kiss Goodnight." Cinderella Castle begins to sparkle and change colors as a narration comes over the park speakers, thanking visitors for coming to the park that day and telling everyone "Until we see you again, have a safe trip home. Thank you, and goodnight" as "When You Wish Upon a Star" plays. It's the best way to end a special day at Walt Disney World.

**DO YOU AGREE WITH BEN
OR HAVE A SUGGESTION
FOR A FUTURE TOP TEN?**

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Skull Island

A New Reign Begins for King Kong at Universal Orlando

By Susan & Simon Veness

When King Kong first burst on to movie screens in 1933, it was with a sense of awe-inspiring immensity that wowed audiences in theaters everywhere. A 1976 re-make added modern luster to the Kong legend and it was a natural fit for Universal Studios when the park opened in Orlando in 1990.

The original attraction, Kongfrontation, featured a terror-filled ride on Manhattan's Roosevelt Island tram-way with enormous New York detail, but, sadly for Kong fans, the ride was scrapped to make way for *Revenge of the Mummy* in 2002.

In May 2015, there was good news for all those who yearned for a comeback from the great ape – Universal was creating Skull Island: Reign of Kong in its Islands of Adventure park, and it promised to raise the bar for all previous theme park experiences.

The ride has now opened and is thrilling a whole new generation of ape enthusiasts, and it's easy to see why. It combines the immensity of the 1930s original with the vivid cinematic showcase of Peter Jackson's 2005 re-make. Add in Universal's own creativity and invention, and you have a major attraction that dazzles from start to finish.

As Universal Orlando's Executive

Producer Mike West told us, "We are set in 1931, so it pre-dates the Carl Denham expedition when he went to Skull Island and brought Kong back to New York City. So what we decided to do was take you all to Skull Island, so you can experience Kong and all the unimaginable creatures that you'll encounter.

"You join the Eighth Wonder Expedition Company, as they are searching the island for creatures of unknown origin. And, as you quickly find out, some of these creatures would be best left unknown!"

The sheer size of Reign of Kong is the first impression of this new area sandwiched between Toon Lagoon and Jurassic Park. The huge gates that lead into the interior are only a sample of what's in store, while the huge queuing area is also a key part of the overall experience, drawing visitors ever deeper into the mystery of Skull Island.

It's all a carefully-crafted process that builds towards the ride itself, including the first use of scare-actors in an Orlando theme park queue (outside of Universal's Halloween Horror Nights program). But, as always, West tells it best.

"This project started a little over three years ago and to see this thing rise up out of the ground in such a massive form is

really a treat," he explained. "We have 150,000 square feet of hand-carved stonework. Every nook and cranny you see in the attraction, save for a few things, was completely hand-carved, taking about 70,000 man-hours. We are very, very proud of it.

"We have done a lot to layer things and build the intensity as you go through, hence you come in through a small entrance and go through various stages of small and then large within, so you kind of pump the guests through almost like a heartbeat, and the intensity builds with each scene that you go through, until finally you get to our ride vehicles, which are quite extraordinary.

"We spent a lot of time and effort to create this story that you see physically around you with all the characters in the queue, so, when you get to the base camp for Eighth Wonder, we didn't want you to get to the ride vehicle and see a track in front of you and think 'Oh, it's a ride in a park.' This is our first completely trackless ride system and the only thing that lies in front of you when you get on our vehicle is the adventure that lies ahead around Skull Island."

One of the highlights of the queuing area is an interior cavern that boasts a forbidding (animatronic) Sha-woman, who



PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO



Skull Island is aptly named as the whole landscape, both inside and out, is littered with skull remnants.

intones words of warning in a strange language (invented completely by West), and which builds to a crescendo of chants with only one discernible word: "Kong, Kong, Kong, KONG!" Fire flashes in the eyes of massive skull sculptures and the sense of stumbling into an alien world is magnificent.

The queue continues to wind through the rock-work until you reach Eighth Wonder's base camp, stacked with cases of provisions like tea and coffee, plus more worrying items, including grenades, high explosives and live animal specimens awaiting transport off the Island. A baby Carnictis – the evil-looking, slavering, fanged giant slug from Jackson's movie – is among the caged exhibits.

Universal Creative Show Producer Adam Rivest revealed, "We spent just as much time developing the queue as we did the ride, as we want people to be engaged the whole time. I love the



Half-way through the queue, guests encounter the mystic Sha-woman, who warns of dangers ahead in a strange language.



immersiveness of the entire attraction. When you walk under the arch, you are in 1931. You won't even see any video monitors in the queue anywhere. Even our lighting uses open-filament light-bulbs in keeping with the period."

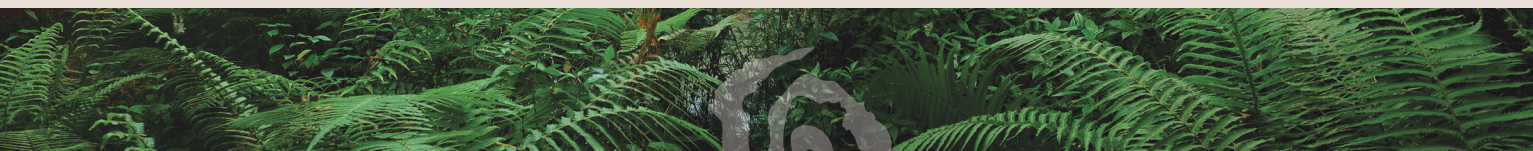
The scale of everything is impressive,

too, not least when the huge, 72-passenger expedition trucks roll up to the loading platform. Like the grand-daddy of those which operate sedately around Kilimanjaro Safaris at Disney's Animal Kingdom, these are heavy-duty vehicles that speak to the enormity of the inner Island.

West explains the concept. "Everything had to be larger than life, from the main gate, which is 80 feet tall; then we had to make sure the interior was big enough," he insisted. "The fact that I am so thrilled, it is an amazing accomplishment for our team. We know guests are going to be



The immensity of Skull Island is well demonstrated by the exterior of the ride, with the main gates towering 80 feet tall.



standing in the queue for a long time. We knew we had to make it big, and luckily with the space we had, we could take up as much room as we wanted. I try not to look at it as a queue and a ride, but as all one story.

“Our real challenge is to keep better-

ing ourselves. We don’t want to say ‘We can do it as good as that.’ We want to do it better. Since Forbidden Journey in The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, which has that amazing queue, we are challenged to keep beating that, to make it bigger and better.”

And that they certainly set out to do. While the ride starts out slow, in the company of one of the five Eighth Wonder drivers, the real sleight of hand is in the fact this is all for show. The “driver” is an animatronic character and everything runs on a pre-arranged program, albeit without the tell-tale tracks.

Rivest took up the story. “It has been a very interesting learning curve. Figuring out how to make this go and sending four vehicles at a time around this building was certainly a challenge, but it’s been performing great. This vehicle holds 72 people and we dispatch a new ride about every two minutes, so we have great throughput on the ride and can really move a lot of people on it. It is a living creature in its own right, just like everything else on the Island.

“Each of the five vehicles has a different character that drives them, so you kind of get a different interpretation of the ride each time. And, if we have inclement weather, we can skip the outside loop so the ride doesn’t have to stop. It is a full six minute and 10 seconds with



Once guests reach the “Base Camp” area of the queue, they encounter the first of the Island’s deadly denizens. A menacing Carnictis has been captured, ready for shipping.



The ride vehicles are huge, custom-made trucks that maintain the 1930s feel while running in a totally modern style - trackless.

the outside loop, and you can ride it three or four times and be sure to see something new each time."

Once aboard the vehicles, and with their 3D glasses in hand, guests are set for the longest ride in Universal Orlando's catalogue of attractions. As Rivest explained, the journey first goes outdoors for that imposing exterior loop that will catch most guests' attention, circling a skull-and-fire infested vista before the gigantic gates open and the expedition truck rumbles into the cavernous interior, along with more chants of "Kong!"

Inside, it quickly becomes clear the Eighth Wonder crew do not have the situation under control and perils aplenty lie in store. The mix of projections, animatronics, wrap-around screens and vibrant

sound effects combine for an energetic presentation of the interior of the Island. All the beasts of Jackson's movie make an appearance, from the lurking Carnictis to the deadly Arachno-claw and the flying predator Terapusmordax.

"We had free rein to add new creatures and interpret Skull Island how we wanted to," Rivest explained. "We had to stick with Peter Jackson's established Universal picture concept, but we were able to develop off of it and come up with whole new scenes and adventures."

As the danger-filled ride develops, so the terrors get larger, with the truck blundering into a threatening mass of carnivorous dinosaurs, the Vastatosaurus Rex. The situation seems hopeless, until ... well, let's just say it's time for a certain

giant ape to make an appearance, for a suitably action-packed showdown with the marauding dinos.

It's a hurtling, crashing, breathless scenario, with the action taking place literally all around your vehicle, which stalls, lurches and seemingly tumbles over cliff edges in ultra-dramatic fashion. You'll be amazed and bewildered at the same time, and, as Rivest suggests, you will definitely want to ride it again and again to take in the detail that is thrown at you in such a helter-skelter manner.

The big finale is also almost worth waiting for in its own right, a face-to-face encounter with the Island's apex predator – and Universal's most challenging animatronic built to date.

It is also West's pride and joy, the culmination of a huge amount of work by Universal's design and engineering teams. "I was really determined to make this a multi-dimensional experience," Mike told us. "And that is especially true when it came to King Kong himself, because that's who you are coming to see."

"I wanted to have that really up-close and personal experience with the star of the show, so that's why I wanted to have him there in person at the end. He is 27 feet tall and he is our biggie. It was important to get that sense of scale, too. You've seen the baby Carnictis in the queue, and now you get the full-on experience."

"Kong was under construction for a couple of years, and he is our star, our show. But we also have to make sure all the other elements are blended together, so you don't know if it's a media screen or a physical set or if it's an animated figure or a figure on the screen. The story has to blend together as one unit."

Rivest is equally delighted with their headline creature, which should also please fans of the old Kongfrontation attraction for its larger-than-life encounter. "It was so important to put Kong on the Island in his own attraction, so we spent a lot of time just developing him and really bringing his character out."

"He is such a great character; he is not

just an angry gorilla. He has got all kinds of emotions, and we wanted to be able to portray all of them. So he is extremely actuated in the face, and his body. We went down to the pore detail in this case and a lot of time went into presenting him the way he is."

The technical aspects of the attraction are equally impressive, with the 3D film all shot in high-definition 4K at 60 frames a second. As Rivest pointed out, "There is a lot of media in that main scene. The 4K media is so vivid that it plays into the set and it's tough to tell what's real and what isn't."

Ultimately, Skull Island: Reign of Kong is an immense undertaking that delivers on the promise of its gargantuan appearance. And, with a height restriction of just 34 inches, it should be a ride that suits almost everyone - little monkeys, too!

In another first for Universal Orlando, the Skull Island queue includes Island native scare-actors that lurk in the dark recesses.

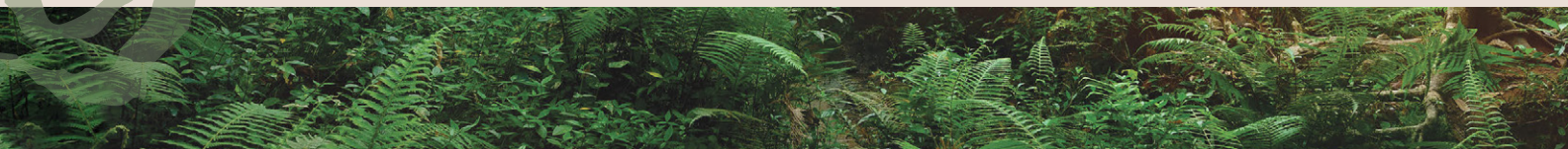


PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO



The big pay-off comes right at the end of the ride with a face-to-face encounter with King Kong himself.

PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO



'FROZEN EVER AFTER'

Norway Pavilion at Epcot Gets a Cool Update

By Barb Nefer

Elsa sings her signature song in a climactic scene of Frozen Ever After.



PHOTO BY MATT STROSHANE/DISNEY

In the movie "Frozen," Queen Elsa rules over Arendelle, a fictional country strongly influenced by Norwegian culture. Now she and her sister, Anna, have officially taken over Norway in the real world, or at least in World Showcase at Epcot. "Frozen Ever After" is a reimagining of the "Maelstrom" boat ride that replaces Vikings, polar bears and oil rigs with Anna, Elsa, Kristoff, Sven, Olaf, and other characters from the movie, and the Royal Sommerhus is a spot where fans can meet the sisters in person.

Maelstrom may be history, but Olaf and friends are getting a warm reception in Frozen Ever After.



PHOTO BY /MITT STROSHANE/Disney

You'll meet friendly trolls and silly Sven during your boat journey through Frozen Ever After.



Musical Boat Ride Through Arendelle

Frozen Ever After is the new nautical journey that replaced the classic Maelstrom ride, which debuted in 1988. Ramit Kapoor, a Disney Marketing Strategy Manager, describes the ride's new incarnation as "just awesome." He said, "Guests have a chance to really get immersed in the story of 'Frozen.' It's Anna and Elsa essentially celebrating a summer snow day, so that means having a chance for our guests to experience it as well."

The ride is a five-and-a-half minute trip through Arendelle on that special day, created by Elsa's icy magic, which makes it about a minute longer than the original. Lauren Niederhiser, assistant project manager at Walt Disney Imagineering, explained, "We did add a couple of new show scenes that make it longer, but for the most part, it's the same ride track as Maelstrom."

Queue Details Help Pass the Time

The adventure begins before you

board your boat, with special touches throughout the queue that draw you into the cartoon's world. The ride tends to have a long line, as you might expect of anything themed to Frozen, so searching out the details helps to pass the time. There's even a cameo by Oaken, who's holding a "Summer Snow Day Blowout" sale at one of his stores. Keep your eyes on the sauna window for a magical effect. There are plenty of decorations on the walls to hold your attention, but don't just scan the room at eye level. Look up and you'll spot portraits and other themed decorations dreamed up by the Imagineers to echo the atmosphere in Arendelle.

The loading area itself is richly decorated too, with a large mural that you'll see as you board your boat. As with the old ride, each boat has four rows and holds a maximum of 12 passengers. Even though you'll be sailing through, just like Maelstrom, don't expect to get wet, other than perhaps a few minor splashes.

Frozen Friends and a Maelstrom Throwback

Olaf is the first "Frozen" friend you'll meet as you embark on your journey, and you'll see him multiple times throughout the trip. The scary trolls from the original Maelstrom have given way to their benevolent cousins from the movie, so keep an eye out for them and you might just hear Grandpappy Troll telling the romantic tale of how Anna and Kristoff met. You'll also see the happy couple themselves, hanging out with the mischievous Sven. Marshmallow and the Snowgies make an appearance too, for fans of the "Frozen Fever" short.

The ride scenes lead up to a dramatic climax with Queen Elsa and the inevitable rendition of "Let It Go." The swelling music is accompanied by special effects that cover the walls and encircle the guests in a mist. The spin and backwards ride are, of course, still part of the ride, now initiated by Elsa rather than trolls. She then joins Anna and Olaf for the grand finale.

Although most vestiges of the orig-

inal ride are gone, Niederhiser said the puffin penguins are still around. "They're a great throwback to Maelstrom," she added. "You'll catch a little glimpse of them hanging out." Keep an eye out right after the drop.

Technology Brings the Characters to Life

Frozen Ever After uses state-of-the-art Audio-Animatronics that make for smooth, life-like movement in places like the scene where Olaf is ice skating. The human characters have projected faces like those used for the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train ride in the Magic Kingdom, where that imaging technology made its debut. That sometimes makes taking good photos of the ride scenes a challenge, but if you want a photo of your group in the boat, that happens automatically if you're using PhotoPass and wearing your MagicBand.

Unlike the Maelstrom exit, which dumped guests into a waiting area for a movie about Norway, Frozen Ever After has a traditional exit that leads, predictably, into the gift shop. Fans of the old ride will enjoy seeing the classic troll statue still in his usual place in the store.

Tips to Cut the Wait

Frozen Ever After is a slow loading ride. Combined with its popularity, that means long wait times that soared as high as five hours on the ride's June 21 opening. While the times have dropped now, it's still the most popular ride at Epcot, routinely posting a 60 to 90 minute wait in the standby line. Most of that time is spent indoors, in an air-conditioned queue, and absorbing the atmosphere and picking out details helps to pass the time, but you'll still want to use some strategies to slash the wait if you can:

- **Use FastPass+.** That's the most obvious strategy, since it lets you use the shorter FastPass line. If there's no FastPass+ available for your upcoming trip, keep checking as slots do open up as people change their plans and cancel their times.

- **If you're not using FastPass+,** get to Epcot at least half an hour before opening time and immediately head to Frozen Ever After. Although the usual



Guests packed into the Frozen Ever After queue. Some waited up to five hours to ride it on opening day.



Imagineers thought of every detail, down to these dolls from the sisters' childhood. You may remember seeing the girls playing with them in the movie.



Technology brings Anna, Elsa and Olaf to life inside Frozen Ever After.



Maelstrom fans who remember the trolls in the ride will be happy to see a tribute to them in a tapestry hanging in the Royal Sommerhus.



Anna and Elsa greet guests separately, in front of their own backdrops.

opening time is 9 a.m., the gates usually open closer to 8:30 a.m., so try to be in line well before then if you want to be at the front of the crowd. As soon as you enter the park, head toward the Norway pavilion by taking a left hand turn when you reach World Showcase from the main Future World path. If you're not sure where to go, just follow the crowd. You won't be able to go all the way to Norway until the official park opening time, so wait by the rope, then be among the first to power walk your way to Frozen Ever After as soon as it drops. Plenty of other people will have the same idea, so you're going to be part of a massive pack, but you'll cut down on the wait if you're toward the front. This is also a good way to get to ride twice if you have Frozen-obsessed kids and a FastPass+ for later in the day.

- **Book a pre-opening breakfast at the Akershus Royal Banquet Hall restaurant.** At around \$35 for kids up to age nine and \$59 for adults, this breakfast buffet is a little pricey, but the time you save is priceless because it gives you a jump on the Frozen Ever After line. If the ride is a priority for your family, that likely means you have some Disney princess fans in

your group who will love dining with favorites like Belle, Ariel, Aurora, Snow White and Cinderella (the characters rotate). Anna and Elsa are not at the breakfast, so warn the kids ahead of time. The buffet is kid-friendly, but it also features some dishes with a Norwegian flair, like smoked fish, peppered mackerel and goat cheese. If you book an early dining time, like 8 a.m., you can have a leisurely meal, get some great photos, and beat the crowd to the ride entrance.

- **Check the wait time before IllumiNations.** If you've already seen IllumiNations, you're at an advantage because many of the people remaining in World Showcase right before closing time are holding waterfront spots for the show. That means the Frozen Ever After line often gets shorter as more of the crowd drifts to the lagoon. Just be sure to get in line before the park closes. Once you're in, you'll get to ride even if the wait stretches past closing.

- **Take advantage of Extra Magic Hours.** If you're staying at a Walt Disney World Resort, check the Epcot Extra Magic Hours schedule during your trip. Arrive at the park early or stay late on the designated days and take advantage of the lower crowds,

since you'll be in before the general public or be able to stay and ride after they leave.

Visit Anna and Elsa's Childhood Vacation Home

Other than highlighting Anna's loneliness, the movie "Frozen" doesn't delve too deeply into the girls' childhood. Now you can visit the place where they used to vacation with their family in the years leading up to the main events of the film. Kapoor describes this new area, the Royal Sommerhus, as "a cabin where all guests have a chance to meet and greet, take photos and get hugs from both of the girls." However, it's also a slice of Norwegian history, created with authentic details and décor that make it a perfect fit for the pavilion.

Niederhiser said, "We made sure that all of the details are really specific to Norway, and that they also tell the story of Anna and Elsa as young girls. The story of the cabin is that this is where they came to be with their family in the summer, and this was kind of their relaxation place, so you'll see that everything around the cabin kind of tells that story and shows their family heritage."



Crowds are usually minimal to meet Anna and Elsa at their Royal Sommerhus. A Frozen gift shop was also added as part of the expansion.



The interior is rustic but homey, just like real cabins in Norway.

A New Space Made to Look Old

Unlike Frozen Ever After, the character greeting area didn't go into an existing structure. "This is a completely new area," Niederhiser explained. "We created this space to extend the architectural story of Norway, so it's a new place for the Anna and Elsa character greeting, but steeped in their family history.

"The cabin is actually based on a real one in Trondheim. The Imagineering creative team traveled to Norway to get a firsthand look at the areas the cabin is based on, to get an idea of the folk art styles, the paintings, the architecture, and to really bring that to life here in Epcot."

Like the ride queue, the Royal Sommerhus is packed with details to take in while you wait, like the sisters' childhood toys and various items like a grandfather clock, furniture, kitchenware, books, tapestries and other wall decorations. While its theming is tied to the movie, it's based on real log cabin summer homes in Norway, mixing in some culture with the character greeting experience.

More Nods to Maelstrom

While the queue is designed pri-

marily to move crowds, the atmosphere is still downright homey. As you move through it, you can easily imagine evenings spent curled up in front of the fireplace with one of the books that line the shelves or picture Anna and Elsa playing with the toys. The overall feel is a family home, interlaced with Norwegian style and Niederhiser said that sharp-eyed guests will find some nods to the old attraction added to the mix. For example, she said, "Some of the tapestries we have are very specific to Norway, and if you look at them closely, you'll see that some of them are actually related to Maelstrom."

Although Anna and Elsa's meet and greet is popular, the Royal Sommerhus was built to handle crowds and keep the wait times manageable. It doesn't have a FastPass+ entrance, but with four meeting rooms, its wait times are often half an hour or less. It's convenient to visit before or after you ride Frozen Ever After, but keep in mind that waits are typically longer in the morning, as the early crowd that stampeded to the ride, heads over to meet the sisters right after they finish. If you see a long line, just come back later in the day.

The Royal Sommerhus is also open during Extra Magic Hours.

Once you've made your way through the queue and reach Anna and Elsa, you'll visit with each of them separately, even though their sets are right next to each other. First you'll meet the comical and laid-back Anna, then finish up with regal Queen Elsa. This character greeting has a relaxed atmosphere, and guests aren't rushed through it. Instead, the sisters spend time chatting with each of their visitors while PhotoPass photographers capture the laughs and hugs, as well as a formal pose. Of course, you can use your own camera, too.

Where to Find More Frozen

While Epcot is now the epicenter for Frozen fans at Walt Disney World, "For the First Time in Forever: A Frozen Singalong Celebration" still runs throughout the day in the Hyperion Theater in Disney's Hollywood Studios. The sisters also appear in the new "Mickey's Royal Friendship Faire" show at the Magic Kingdom, which takes place several times a day on the Cinderella Castle Forecourt Stage, and on their float in the "Festival of Fantasy" parade.

Mickey & Friends



Goofy invites Princess Tiana and her friends to Mickey's Royal Friendship Faire.

on the Castle Stage

Magic Kingdom's New Castle Show is Set Faire

By Susan & Simon Veness

It's arguably the most dramatic stage in Walt Disney World and it has seen dozens of different performances over the years, from Mickey Mouse and the gang to the likes of President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim.

It has been remodeled, rebuilt and re-worked a number of times, and yet the Castle Forecourt Stage at the Magic Kingdom remains one of the most iconic show-pieces in the park. With the immense backdrop of Cinderella Castle right behind it, the stage has all the classic Disney hallmarks of magic and enchantment. And now it's home to Mickey's Royal Friendship Faire, the latest in that long line of live entertainment productions in front of the castle.

Replacing the Dream Along With

Mickey show, the Friendship Faire is a 23-minute song-and-dance extravaganza featuring Mickey and Minnie (of course), plus Princesses Tiana and Rapunzel and their princes, and special guests Anna, Elsa and Olaf from "Frozen". It was conceived in early 2015 and took just over 12 months to create.

The show comes in four separate acts, as the main characters introduce their "special friends" to the Faire and Mickey keeps a surprise up his sleeve for his favorite gal. Tap-dancing Tiana and Naveen from "The Princess and the Frog" set the ball rolling, and they are followed by "Tangled" duo Rapunzel and Flynn Rider, along with some of the "hooligans" from the Snuggly Duckling.

Donald, Daisy and Goofy add their own



An appearance by Queen Elsa highlights one of the four main song-and-dance segments of the show.



The costuming is an important part of the Royal Friendship Faire, with Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, Donald and Daisy having their own custom-made outfits that feature a European Renaissance style. Look for new outfits during new seasonal finales.

touches to the proceedings, and the show builds towards a big finale as Olaf turns up, closely followed by Princess Anna and Queen Elsa (as Mickey's guests, of course). Finally, it is time for the grand dance, with all the characters returning for a royal cavalcade and "Warm hugs for everyone!"

With all-new regal costuming and lively music, it maintains that traditional Disney feeling, with the trademark Castle Forecourt fireworks and an underlying message that celebrates friendships old and new. Book-ending the show is the new song

"On This Day", written by Valerie Vigoda and Brendan Milburn, who also wrote music for "Tinker Bell: Secret of the Wings" and "Toy Story: The Musical" for Disney Cruise Line.

The show's guest-list was extremely well chosen, as Show Director Tara Anderson explained, "We wanted to tell stories we hadn't told before on the Castle Forecourt Stage. Tiana's and Rapunzel's stories fit that bill perfectly and we also wanted characters that were well known to our guests. Anna and Elsa certainly meet that

need, too. It was a blue sky idea, inspired by the location on the castle stage. We knew we wanted Mickey to be involved, and we went from there.

"We had a wonderful run with Cinderella and all those 'classic' classics, but we just wanted to introduce our guests to some new people in a different way. We also wanted to have a real burst of color on the stage as well as that fanciful look, so the costumes were designed with the influences of European culture, as well as the desire for a Fairytale/Renaissance Faire feel. We wanted a bright, happy color palette that would bring the stage alive."

The dance sequences sprang from the movies themselves, with Anderson revealing, "Each 'friend' who arrives at the party has their own story to tell, so we wanted to bring the world of Tiana's Palace, the floor show, if you will, and the tap dancing was just an extra special thing. We were inspired by the scene early on in 'The Princess and the Frog', where Prince Naveen is walking around New Orleans and comes upon a young boy who is tap dancing on the sidewalk. And, as a tap dancer myself, I have always wanted to put it in one of my shows!"

Anderson has worked on the Move It! Shake It! Dance & Play It! Street Party and Mickey's 'Boo-to-You' Halloween Parade in the past, as well as Mickey's Once Upon a Christmastime Parade, Tiana's Showboat Jubilee, the Main Street Trolley Show and many others. She said, "Whenever you have Mickey and his friends as part of your story, you will always be able to capture the classic feel, and I think this show's message about the joys of friendship and how it improves our lives is one that is classic and contemporary. I truly hope guests take away a greater appreciation of the friendships that make up their lives, and that they share a warm hug with those they love most!"

The history of the Castle Forecourt Stage obviously dates back to the opening of the park itself in 1971, when the Walt Disney World Band played in front of the castle as part of a wide-ranging array of live entertainment that also included The Diamond Horseshoe Revue in Frontierland and The Kids Next Door on the Fantasyland Terrace next to the Pinocchio Village Haus restaurant.

Things were relatively small-scale, though, until the early 1980s, when Disney significantly expanded the stage



Flynn Rider and Rapunzel, from "Tangled", lead a fun chorus of "I've Got A Dream," with many of the lovable ruffians from the Snuggly Duckling, who add some acrobatics to the show.



Goofy gets his own star turn, with some dancing partners from "The Princess and the Frog", as their New Orleans jazz style provides more all-star merriment with the songs "When We're Human" and "Dig A Little Deeper".

and brought in more large-scale productions. Gene Columbus, now the executive director of the Orlando Repertory Theater, was the manager of entertainment at the Magic Kingdom at the time.

He recalled, "The setting is everything for the shows there. Where are you going to find a backdrop as spectacular as that? And I love the Castle Forecourt Stage even more now that it has been reconfigured as part of that whole castle hub area. You have many more viewing spots, and great sight lines, generally speaking.

"Back in my day we had gardens and trees in the way! When it came to performances, people would be everywhere trying to watch them and, from the stage manager's view, we would be looking at the trees and thinking, if only they weren't there. And now they aren't. From the performers' viewpoint, it is a big improvement."

Gene was involved in creating and staging many different shows over the years, and he has fond memories of many of them. Rain, wind or shine, 'the show must go on' was the mentality, even though, as an open-air stage, there are obvious challenges with presenting live performances in the ever-changing (but largely hot) Florida conditions.

"If you are there, then you are there in the heat and cold," Gene observed. "Everybody accepts that is the nature of the business we are in, even if people think the magic of Disney extends to controlling the weather!

"Water is a very, very interesting challenge and, if it can find a way into the stage and equipment somehow, some way, it will. While I was there, we would go on stage and find leaks and think 'How did it get in there?' We did all these things to seal it and protect it, but rainwater always seems to find a way in.

"As the entertainment manager, the biggest factor therefore with the weather was always the stage getting wet. It obviously rains a lot in Florida and there is high humidity to go with it, so keeping it safe for the performers was a critical part of the job.

"We were well aware that a family might only have five days at Walt Disney World and, with a day

at the Magic Kingdom, they only had a few opportunities to see the show. So we did everything we could to make sure we rarely canceled one. If we could squeeze in just a part of it, we would do it."

Now it is the turn of Mickey's Royal Friendship Faire to wow guests once more, with its new characters, new staging and new music. Only time will tell if it joins the ranks of classics, but you can be sure it remains one of the must-see attractions in this eternally magical kingdom.



When Anna, Elsa and Olaf hit the Castle Forecourt Stage, it sets the scene for the big show-stopping number from "Frozen", the now classic song "Let It Go".



Finally, the whole cast get together to celebrate true friendship and finish out the vibrant performance with the memorable all-new number "On This Day," which was written by Valerie Vigoda and Brendan Milburn, who also wrote the music for several of the shows aboard the ships of Disney Cruise Line.

By Jackie and Matt Roseboom

Loews Sapphire Falls Resort

Universal Orlando's Newest Resort Offers a Caribbean Getaway



The falls of Sapphire Falls can be seen behind the resort, as you're walking to CityWalk or taking a boat.



There's a brand new resort at Universal Orlando. Loews Sapphire Falls Resort sits between Cabana Bay Beach Resort and the Royal Pacific Resort. Instead of taking you to the Pacific or the '50s, this one is a modern tropical Caribbean escape, complete with cascading waterfalls and palm trees. They even have steel drum music by the pool.

But before we relax poolside, let's start where all guests begin their vacation, the lobby. It's large with comfortable seating. The mesmerizing beach ball baskets hanging from the ceiling draw your eyes up as you walk in. You can check in, relax or enjoy the large screen television in the back, or stop by the concierge or ticket desk to get ready for your time away from the resort.

Of course, there's also a gift shop in

the lobby. The Universal Studio Store sells magazines, clothing and guest necessities. They also sell Sapphire Falls logo items and some of the same merchandise you'll find in the theme parks.

The guest rooms are colorful and tropical with all the modern amenities: large television, desk, plenty of storage, coffee maker, small fridge, safe and ironing board. Most rooms have a separate bath and vanity area. Views of the pool are best, but more expensive. They also offer kid suites with a king bed as well as two twins in a separate room. A rollaway bed is available for \$25. There is also an option for connecting two rooms. The rooms and public areas offer free wi-fi with the option to pay for even faster speeds. As with all Loews hotels, pets are permitted for an extra \$50 per night.



The New Dutch Trading Co. will most likely be a frequent stop during your stay, as you grab a quick meal, snack or coffee.



The standard guest rooms have all the amenities you expect plus very comfortable beds.

In keeping with the theme of the resort, all of the dining options feature a Caribbean flair:

- The New Dutch Trading Co. is the quick serve option just off the lobby, with hot meals as well as ready-made snacks, meals and beverages. It also serves as the ice cream and coffee shop. They're open for all three meals. We recommend buying one of the refillable mugs.
- Strong Water Tavern is more than just a lobby bar. They specialize in



The view of the huge pool from the top of the slide. Notice the area in the middle between the groups of trees? That's a simulated sandbar you can wade through to get to the other side of the pool.

rum and offer tastings daily. They also have a tapas-style menu for small plates to share. The ceviches are a popular choice.

- Amatista Cookhouse is the main restaurant in the resort. Head down the elevator or take the cool circular stairwell for breakfast, lunch and dinner. They also feature Caribbean-inspired meals. Character breakfasts are available on certain days.
- Drhum Club Kantine is located on the pool deck. There you can enjoy a poolside meal and of course, a yummy tropical cocktail. The adjoining fire pit is a great place to enjoy the live music.

You'll most likely be staying at this resort to spend some fun days in the theme parks, but try and fit some time in for chillin' by the pool. You'll really feel like you're in the Caribbean as you're listening to steel drum music with a drink in your hand. It's blissful. The 16,000-square-foot pool is the largest at any of the Universal Orlando resorts. It features a hot tub, children's play area with pop-up jets and a slide. It also has two white sandy beaches and a unique "sandbar" feature in the pool.

The resort's other offerings include a fitness room, arcade, business center, car rental service and a laundromat. A convention center is currently being built and should open soon.

You can get to CityWalk, then on to the Universal theme parks by bus, boat or a short walk. They also offer scheduled free transportation to SeaWorld, Aquatica and Wet 'n Wild (switching to Volcano Bay next year). Sapphire Falls guests with park tickets can also get early admission into The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, but Universal Express, which allows you to skip the lines, isn't included at this resort. Once in the Universal parks, you can charge purchases to your room and also have merchandise sent back to the hotel to pick up later.

This newest Universal Orlando resort isn't quite as upscale as Portofino Bay and Royal Pacific, and not as unique as the Hard Rock or Cabana Bay. But if you're looking for a beautiful resort with a great pool and amenities, give Loews Sapphire Falls a stay.



The first thing you'll probably notice when you enter the lobby is the large chandelier. It looks like it's made of beach balls but they are actually made of baskets. This actually makes them "basket" balls.



The terrace outside of Strong Water Tavern offers great lakeside views with Islands of Adventure in the background.

LOEWS SAPPHIRE FALLS RESORT

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- Location:** 6601 Adventure Way,
Universal Orlando
- Prices: Standard Room:**
\$119 to \$299 per night
- Parking:** Valet \$29 per night,
Self \$22 per night
- Phone:** 888-430-4999
- Website:** loewshotels.com/sapphire-falls-resort

By Susan and Simon Veness

Tiffins: Storytelling through Space & Taste

Fine Dining at Disney's Animal Kingdom

The new Tiffins restaurant at Disney's Animal Kingdom is a departure from all other theme park restaurants. Enter to the "sounds of Africa" and you encounter a low-key, elegant environment rich with authenticity. Sketch books belonging to key Imagineers who designed and created Disney's Animal Kingdom, including

lead designer Joe Rohde, are on display. Photographs from their travels are pinned to corkboards hanging in the hallways. Tiffins — those curious metal lunchboxes from which the restaurant takes its name — made their way here from all over the world, adding to the realism. And that authenticity extends to the menu.

The move toward more imaginative menus has been a welcome change at Walt Disney World, as has the focus on experiential dining. Animal Kingdom is based on reality, and it was fitting that Tiffins' menu should reflect the travels of real people — the Imagineers who helped create the park and its attractions. They traveled the world, and Tiffins is an "art



The low-key exterior of Tiffins is in sharp contrast to the vibrant, artifact-laden interior, which invites guests to explore an array of culinary possibilities while telling the park's story.

gallery” based on their adventures. The Asian-themed Trek Gallery and African-themed Safari Gallery highlight the locations that inspired the park’s design, and the Grand Gallery celebrates various animal species protected through the Disney Conservation Fund. Nomads Lounge — our new favorite place to hang out with a drink and tapas-style “street food” — focuses on visitor input, through the tags hanging over the bar, which guests can purchase and fill in with memories from their travels; ceiling trim highlighting questions regarding guests’ travels; and banners that feature artist renderings of their answers. Its outdoor patio is prime relaxation real-estate on balmy Florida evenings.

Imagineer Emily O’Brien was instrumental in creating Tiffins, and she joined us for lunch and a tour. “When we came up with the design for this restaurant, we were working hand-in-hand with the concept development team, and they saw it as an opportunity to take advantage of the locations we were focusing on for the inspiration for the park as a whole. Our animal program teams gave us ideas about how to approach artwork. It was a group of people that all cared about the authenticity of this park and the experience for the guest. That heartfelt care shows up in the flavors and the environment. It’s ‘storytelling through space and taste.’”

Chef de Cuisine Anthony Deluca, who ran Walt Disney World’s Flying Fish, California Grill and Yachtsman Steakhouse before he was tapped to open Tiffins, walked us through the menu, which features items such as French-inspired duck, Moroccan-inspired chicken and Asian-inspired whole fried fish. With each dish, the culinary team’s dedication to authenticity shines through.

“The Chermoula-Rubbed Chicken is very Moroccan,” Chef Deluca said. “You can make couscous at home in a matter of seconds, but the way they do it in Morocco makes it a celebration. I worked with a gentleman who was from Morocco and he said, ‘Let me show you how my mother did it’. We want to do things the right way.”



Nomad Lounge & Cocktail Bar is one of the highlights of the restaurant. It’s a superb homage to all the places the park’s designers visited in their quest to create the right level of detail and authenticity, while also offering a chance for guests to make their own mark.



The Grand Gallery is the main dining room within the restaurant itself, presenting a grand celebration of a wide variety of animal species the park supports and protects through the eco-friendly Disney Conservation Fund.



One of the signature cocktails is Jenn's Tattoo, a delicious watermelon-based concoction with Ketel One Vodka.



Outside Nomad Lounge is an elegant open-air patio. It's sure to appeal to guests looking for a tranquil sanctuary away from the theme park hustle-bustle.



When it comes to the food, the Signature Bread Service is a great shareable appetizer with its three dips and olive oil.

We asked Chef if there was anything that really pushed the envelope. "We make a traditional French head cheese, which is something you rarely see, but we have a lot

of foodies coming out, especially around Food and Wine time. They truly appreciate it and that's why we do it. They also appreciate a great duck dish. I put a lot of steps into ours because usually restaurants don't sell much duck, but I was wrong. It's selling really well."

Our meal started with Black-Eyed Pea Fritters with Zhough Yogurt, and Bread Service with three dips, including a fabulous spicy Harissa Yogurt with fresh red jalapeños from Fresno. We also tried the zesty Sustainable Seasonal Fish Crudo with a roasted corn salsa that had a delicate but flavorful crunch. Guava and cilantro provided a superb counterpoint, as did the tiny Peruvian sweetie-drop peppers, whose pop was delightful when we bit down on them.

Aromatic, Mediterranean-inspired Marinated Grilled Octopus, our stand-out favorite, is a testament to the adventurous spirit of Tiffins' guests. "It's a foodie niche, and it has a long preparation time," Chef said. "The sous vis process

makes it very tender, and we add olive oil, herbs, shallots and garlic, then cook it for five hours. Char grilling gives it a smoky flavor, and we serve it with a French braised artichoke Barigoule, saffron aioli, olives, tomatoes and capers. I'm a big fan of putting a couple of extra steps into the food. The way you treat it makes food a little bit better."

Emily confirmed, adding, "I'm not a seafood lover. I'm from Ohio. We ate fish sticks when I was growing up. I tried the octopus and it was like butter. I've had it three times this week."

Our entrees included Hoisin-Glazed Halibut, creamy and smooth with great flavor depth; Berkshire Pork Tenderloin in a fragrant Red Mole sauce, with rich, bacon-laced Hominy Succotash; and Pork and Mesa Tamale, with a wonderful earthy quality. One of our group stepped outside her comfort zone and ordered the superbly moist, meaty Whole-Fried Sustainable Fish, which easily flaked off the bone.

The custom-blend Indonesian coffee

was another big hit, while the Kungaloosh Spiced Excursion Ale is brewed exclusively for Disney and is available nowhere else in the world. Tiffins' cocktail menu is so original, guests simply can't go wrong, and the wine menu includes Chilean and Argentinian vintages new to Walt Disney World.

Our dessert of tangy Calamansi Mousse, made with a Vietnamese citrus fruit, was dotted with basil sugar and heavily dusted with bright orange zest, topped with an elegant chocolate swirl, while the rich, ultra-smooth South American Chocolate Ganache was highlighted with toasted parmesan cheese chips, for a delightful contrast.

We asked Chef Deluca about Orlando's changing food scene. "I've lived here for 25 years," he said, "and Orlando wasn't a food town to begin with. It's not quite New York or Chicago, but we have a lot to be proud of, and Disney has been a huge part of that. There are so many foods in the world, and Jiko and Sanaa were great steps forward in branching out, but we have African, Asian and Indian cuisines, and it really opened things up."

Chef Deluca calls his offerings "Modern Worldly Cuisine", and delights in the compliment, "It doesn't feel like theme park food", but whether you're a genuine foodie or just interested in trying dishes found nowhere else, Tiffins is a true culinary adventure.

TIFFINS

.....

Location: Disney's Animal Kingdom

Price Range:

Appetizers: \$11 to \$16

Entrees: \$29 to \$53

Desserts: \$9 to \$12

Kids Meals: \$9 to \$15

Phone: 407-939-3463

Website: disneyworld.com

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
and 4 p.m. to
park closing daily

Tiffins is a Signature restaurant.

They participate in the Disney Dining Plan
(2 credits) and take Tables in Wonderland.



One of the more unusual - but extremely tasty - items on the menu is the Whole-Fried Sustainable Fish, a well-presented adventure in fresh fish with a whole Yellow Snapper in a fermented black bean sauce and with Som Tam, an Asian green papaya salad.



Among the imaginative range of appetizers, the Marinated Grilled Octopus is a real Tiffins specialty. It's a Mediterranean-inspired dish that is char-grilled to give it a delightful smoky quality and a buttery-smooth finish.

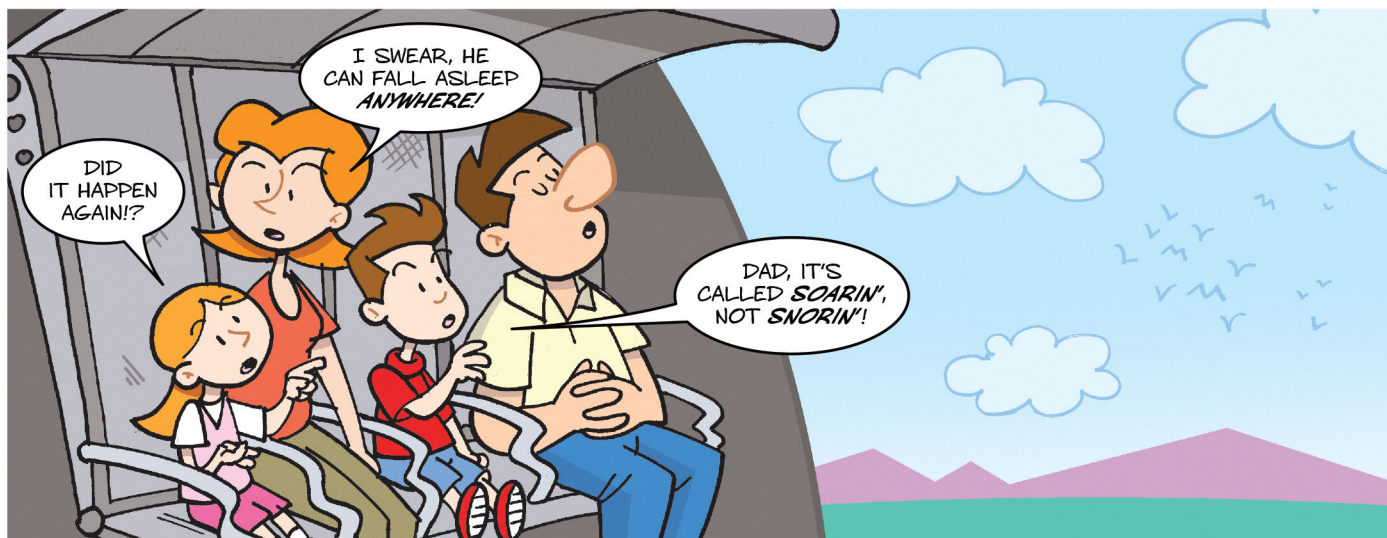


Another great appetizer is the Sustainable Seasonal Fish Crudo, above left, which comes with a superb roasted corn salsa. The must-try dessert is the decadently rich and super-smooth South American Chocolate Ganache, above right.



AMUSEMENT PARK

By John Green & Pat Lewis





SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the 10 differences in these two photos?

During a recent media event for the new Soarin' Around the World ride at Epcot, we spotted these Pokémon players headed into the park to try to catch them all. The theme parks have been a popular place to play the new mobile game Pokémon Go.



1. Misty's bracelet is now blue.
2. Ash's hat symbol has been flipped.
3. A barricade stand has been added to the rope (mid right side of photo).
4. Ash's keychain is gone from his belt loop (waist high).
5. Misty now has two buttons on the side of her overalls instead of three.
6. The logo T2C is missing from the wing of the red hang glider.
7. Pikachu on Ash's shoulder is larger.
8. There are additional trees (top left side of the photo).
9. The Imagineer is now wearing a green shirt (right side of the photo).
10. There is now a cloud in the sky (top left side of photo).



THE RUMOR QUEUE

By Fowl Owlerson

Hello, Attractions readers! Welcome to another edition of "The Rumor Queue"! It's autumn, which means it'll be a notch below "sweltering" as far as seasons go in Orlando. Living in an ostensibly tropical environment has had a strange effect on me (horned owls are accustomed to northern climates, you see), but I am getting used to it.



Digression aside, let's delve into the latest theme park rumors.

The Future of Toon Lagoon

So "The Secret Life of Pets" was a smashing success for Universal and a source has disclosed that internal discussions are moving forward, and the ride will happen on both East and West coasts. It was rumored The Secret Life of Pets would replace Shrek 4D. However, I've heard it may go where the amphitheater in Toon Lagoon currently resides. Speaking of Toon Lagoon, there's a fascinating rumor a source shared with me.

Toon Lagoon was intended to encapsulate the feeling of sitting at the breakfast table reading the colorful assortment of the Sunday comics section, but this is a product of a bygone era. Toon Lagoon is antiquated

and Universal is aware of this. The company has been in talks to license new properties for the space.

Cartoon Network's current assortment of properties are rumored to be licensed by Universal for Toon Lagoon, which would include "Regular Show" and "Adventure Time" to only name two shows (that also happen to be my favorites). Another source disclosed Universal's acquisition of DreamWorks enables them to fall back on previous and future properties should this deal not pan out.

More Wizarding World

I've heard Dragon Challenge may become the future site of a "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" experience. The ride is rumored to be two new coaster tracks with a queue that'll be far more intricate than anything Universal has done so far. This and a Ministry of Magic attraction where Fear Factor Live resides are rumored to be the third phase of The Wizarding World.

Epcot IP

A "Guardians of the Galaxy" experience is rumored to be replacing Epcot's Universe of Energy. With the success of Frozen Ever

After, Disney is rumored to be pushing forward with splicing intellectual properties into Epcot's DNA. Rumors point to Tron, Big Hero 6, Ratatouille, Studio Ghibli and Inside Out as potential concepts.

Tomorrowland

Over in Magic Kingdom's Tomorrowland, I heard a promising rumor that Stitch's Great Escape! (previously ExtraTERRORestrial Alien Encounter) may be replaced with a Wreck-It Ralph experience that'll be accomplished with VR technology.

In other Tomorrowland news, Disneyland's Star Tours is rumored to be closing for a version of Iron Man Experience that's coming to Tomorrowland in Hong Kong Disneyland.

DISCLAIMER

The thoughts expressed here are not purported as fact and should be viewed as hearsay until officially confirmed or denied by the companies mentioned.

Have a rumor, comment, or question? Send them our way at info@attractionsmagazine.com. You can also strike up a conversation with yours truly on Twitter @fowlowlerson.



MYSTERY PHOTO

The deadline for entries is Nov. 10, 2016. One answer allowed per person, per issue. Please include your name and mailing address with your answer. Everyone who submits the correct location will go into a drawing. One person, randomly selected from all the correct entries, will win a prize. We reserve the right to publish the name, city and state of those entering. One winner per household allowed per year.

WIN A PRIZE!

Tell us the name of this area and the theme park you can find it in. To enter, e-mail your answer, along with your name and mailing address to mystery@attractionsmagazine.com.

Hint: You'll want to take pictures with the creatures in this theme park area.



LAST ISSUE'S MYSTERY PHOTO ANSWER

Congratulations to Grant Aleman from Titusville, Fla. He recognized the photo as from inside the queue of Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring Aerosmith at Disney's Hollywood Studios.



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- ★ Detailed **RIDE INFO** — including wait time curve, height restrictions, tips and places nearby



OUT OF THE LOOP

Attractions News from Outside the Orlando Area

By Andy Guinigundo

Tower of Terror to Transform to Guardians of the Galaxy

Disney California Adventure, Anaheim, Calif. – In an effort to grow the Marvel superhero universe at Disneyland, The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at Disney California Adventure will soon be transformed into Guardians of the Galaxy – Mission: Breakout. The newly themed ride will feature a character named Taneleer Tivan, the Collector. Unfortunately, the Guardians are the latest acquisitions to his collection. However, Rocket, the raccoon-like member of the Guardians, has a daring escape plan and park guests will play a part. No doubt, the former dropping elevators will be used to their full potential in the course of the escape. The project is being headed-up by none other than legendary Disney Imagineer Joe Rohde. The transformed attraction is slated to drop into this universe next summer.

Kings Island Announces New Wooden Coaster

Kings Island, Mason, Ohio – At the end of July, Kings Island did something not done very often at theme parks these days. They announced the construction of a new wooden coaster: Mystic Timbers. Hundreds of enthusiasts waited several hours to be among the first to hear the announcement live at the park. This addition will further position the park as a roller coaster destination. This will be their 16th coaster and fourth wooden coaster.



The coaster is designed and will be built by Great Coasters International. They built Gold Striker at California's Great America and did work on GhostRider at Knott's Berry Farm, two of Kings Island's sister parks. Mystic Timbers will cover 3,265 feet and reach a height of 109 feet. Features will include a tunnel, extreme S-curve and 16 airtime hills. Park Vice President and General Manager Greg Scheid said, "Mystic Timbers is naturally exciting because of its setting in a densely wooded area. The natural rugged terrain and tunnel ensure a unique and memorable ride experience". Riders enter a shed at the end

of the coaster and Kings Island has asked the question, "What's in the shed?" I guess we will have to wait to find out. It's expected to open next spring.

Wooden Mean Streak Roller Coaster to "Get the Axe"

Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio – Cedar Point has announced one of their classic wooden coasters, Mean Streak, will "Get the Axe". This means Mean Streak will no longer exist in its current form after this season. Speculation has surrounded the coaster, which is at times described by riders as overly rough. The natural follow



up question remains — what will become of it and/or the prime real estate the ride now occupies? As Cedar Point is an actual “point”, meaning it’s surrounded by water, in order to build something new, something old must go. Does “axe” mean the whole structure goes away and a shiny new steel coaster will be constructed in its place? Or, does it mean, as many experts guess, a company like Rocky Mountain Construction will remake it with a steel track on the wooden frame? When the ride opened in 1991, it was a record breaker. At 161 feet tall and 65 mph, it was the tallest and fastest wooden coaster around. After 26 million plus riders, the coaster will receive its “last rites” on Sept. 16, the opening of the 20th HalloWeekends.



RMC Builds Wildfire at Kolmården Wildlife Park

Kolmården Wildlife Park, Bråviken Bay, Norrköping, Sweden – Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC) has completed its first European coaster: Wildfire. RMC is known for pushing the envelope in roller coaster construction. Perhaps where they shine the brightest is in their from-the-ground-up installations including Goliath and Outlaw Run. Kolmården proclaims Wildfire to be the “best wooden coaster in the world”. A glance at the stats may make you a believer. This 4,266-foot-long coaster reaches a height of 187 feet (yes, nearly a wooden “hyper coaster”) and travels 71 mph. It inverts three times including a zero-G stall and two heartline rolls. The ride also



includes 12 airtime moments. The view of the Swedish countryside from the top of the lift hill is reportedly spectacular.

Hersheypark to Construct Three Drop Towers

Hersheypark, Hershey, Penn. – Next year, Hersheypark will open the Hershey Triple Tower. The three towers will operate independently and have their own queues. The Hershey Kisses Tower will stand 80 feet while Reese's Tower will be 131 feet tall. These will be “double-shot” towers, propelling riders quickly to the top then lowering them in a series of air-cushioned bounces before repeating the process. The tallest will be Hershey Tower at 189 feet. It will offer space shot or turbo drop. Space shot propels riders rapidly to the top of the tower while turbo drop drops riders quicker than free fall. The three towers will operate independently and have

their own queues. You should be able to drop by these new towers by the Springtime in the Park event next year.

Ninjago World Opens at Legoland California Resort

Legoland California Resort, Carlsbad, Calif. – Comedian Joel McHale was joined by Merlin's Magic Wand guests from Rady Children's Hospital and the Autism Society for a ceremonial ribbon cutting commemorating the opening of Ninjago World at Legoland California. Merlin's Magic Wand is a global charitable organization that supplies attraction tickets and travel grants to seriously ill, disadvantaged or disabled children. Ninjago The Ride lets guests use hand gestures to throw fireballs, shock waves, ice and lightning to defeat villains. The area also includes 22 new Lego models, Wu's Warehouse retail outlet and Ninja Kitchen, serving Asian street food.





LIGHTS, CAMERA, ATTRACTION!

The Incredible Hulk Coaster at Universal's Islands of Adventure recently reopened after the track was completely rebuilt and the queue and entrance were remodeled (See page 14). But it's the new lighting package that makes it really stand out. You can now see where the Hulk stands from miles away each night via the new spotlights that shine straight up.



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